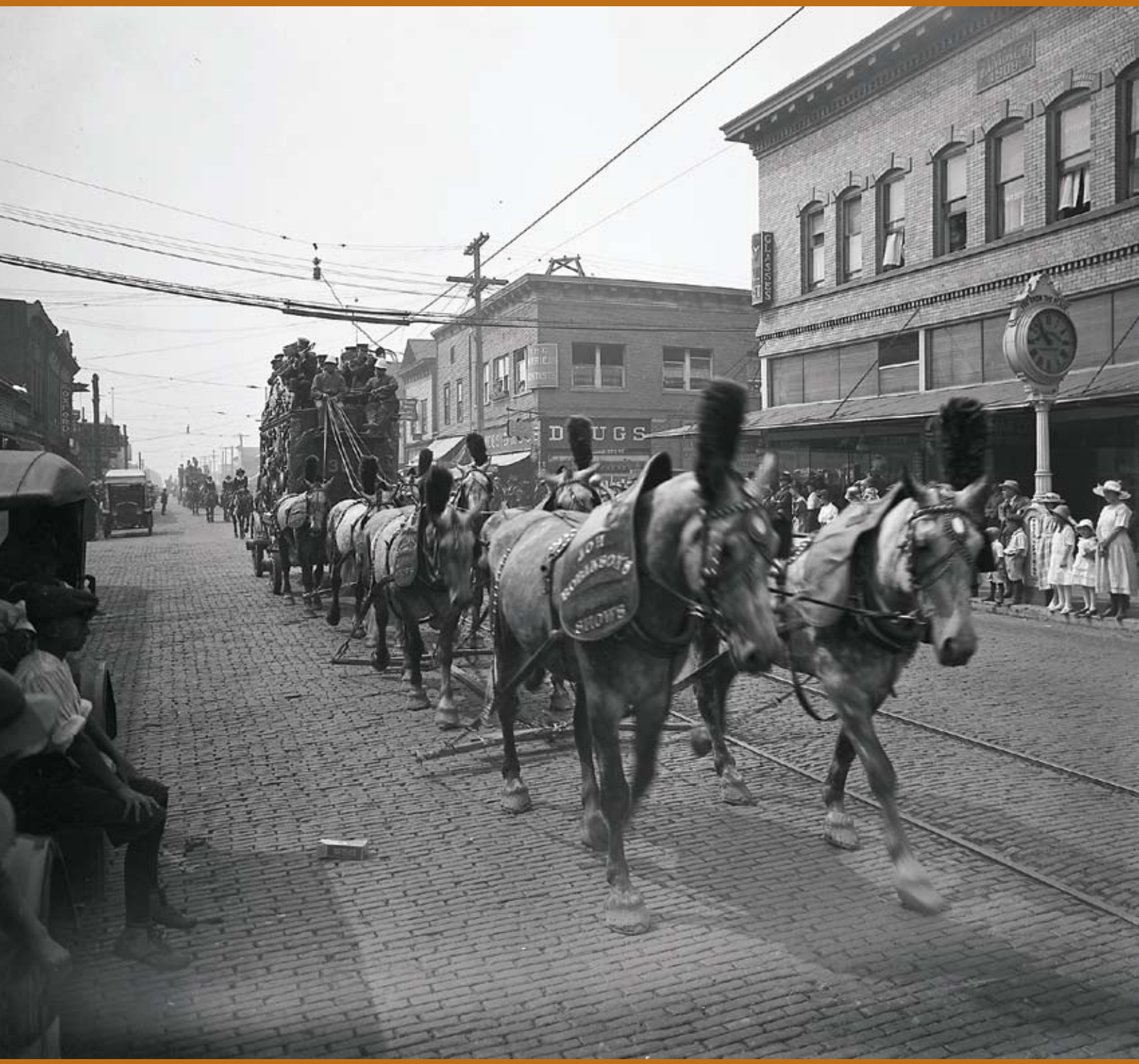
Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society Vol. 66 No. 3 2022



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About the Covers

Here it comes!

It seems fitting that we feature a bandwagon on the cover of our circus history journal that is named after such venerable vehicles. Let your imagination take you back to a pleasant summer morning as trombones and other blaring brass instruments mixed their music with the echoes of iron horseshoes clopping on the boundless bricks below. The date was August 14, 1920, and John Robinson Shows had arrived in Centralia, Washington for a one-day stand in the small town located about 60 miles southwest of Seattle.

Anticipation of circus day had been tremendous, and now it was in full swing. Only a moment before, an excited exclamation had advanced along the sides of the street – "Here it comes!" Then the first bandwagon came into full view.

It must have been magical, yet the glory days of horse-drawn circus parades were quickly winding down. No longer were Forepaugh, Bailey and the Sells brothers staging lavish street spectacles, and the Ringlings would end their every-morning marches by the end of the 1920 season. Over the next two decades, only a handful of American shows presented daily horse-drawn parades. Cole Bros. was the last to do so in 1939.

The John Robinson Bandwagon #30, aka the Lion & Gladiator Bandwagon, has had an esteemed existence. Fred Dahlinger traced this parade wagon's history in a 1998 *Bandwagon* article.[1] The wagon served as John Robinson's lead bandwagon from 1917 into 1922. It was used earlier by Howes Great London, toured with Famous Robinson, then later served Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace. Its final service came in 1945 when it was included in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's spectacle under the big top. The wagon was placed on loan at the Ringling Museum of the Circus from 1948 through 1979, and it was loaned to Circus World Museum from 1984 until the fall of 2013. Today, the bandwagon is preserved by Feld Entertainment, having been owned by the Ringling and Feld organizations since 1929.[2]

Just before relocating to Texas, 33-year-old Basil Clemons took this photograph of the John Robinson parade in Centralia.[3] The sidewalk clock in the photo marked the time as a few minutes before 11:00 A.M. In a sense, however, he recorded a timeless image that morning a little over a century ago.

Clemons took the photo on the back cover on October 26, 1927 when Al G. Barnes Circus appeared in his hometown of Breckenridge, Texas. Irene Grizzell performed with the Barnes show for only a few seasons beginning in 1925.

1. Fred Dahlinger, Jr., "Mugivan and Bowers First Big Bandwagon," *Bandwagon,* Sept./Oct. 1998, pp. 4-8.
2. The wagon was acquired by Ringling-Barnum in September 1929 as part of the acquisition of the American Circus Corporation and its five shows.
3. The existence and specific location of Hotel Oxford and Holly-Mar hardware store on North Tower Ave. in Centralia, as well as present-day photography of the 1909 Zimmer building, helped to confirm the place where the photograph was taken. Moreover, John Robinson dates in Washington state did not include Centralia in 1919 when Clemons briefly lived and worked in nearby Seattle, and the photographer settled in Texas before the end of 1920.

Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

2022 Volume 66, Number 3

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Within These Pages

Ladies and Gentlemen…readers of all ages…we direct your attention to the classic compositions and pictographic representations recorded in this faithful document that you are about to behold. Within these pages…we proudly present…newfound stories of circus days gone by!

This issue of *Bandwagon* opens with an exceptional set of Basil Clemons black & white images of the American circus during the 1920s. The interest in similar photo essays has been considerable in recent years, and the photographic work of the "boomtown bohemian" more than a century ago will not disappoint such fascination.

Next, we have the Gollmars of Baraboo, who like their cousins the Ringlings, established themselves as "Sunday Schoolers," upholding impeccable standards on their show and assuring that it would be free of illicit practices. Yet when the Gollmar brothers leased their title to the new American Circus Corporation in 1922, they unwittingly associated their family name with a season of "Grift, Gambling and Girls" as Chris Berry has characterized it. Understandably, some might be troubled by the title's reference to "girls," but the article's disclosures explain why it is more than just alliteration. The 1922 tour has been written about before, but never with the vivid stories and carefully researched detail Chris provides.

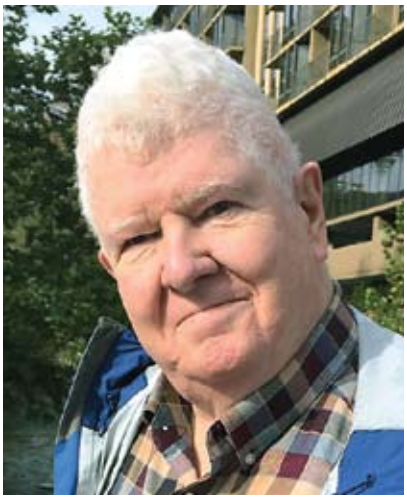
Lane Talburt's multi-part series on John Pugh continues with the Part V installment tracing the circus manager's experiences from 1969 through 1975. The narrative covers the highs and lows during seven seasons on tour with Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Through Talburt's written record, as well as the image contributions of many individuals and institutions, readers will gain new knowledge about the operation of the large truck show and its general manager during the period.

If subscribers enjoyed Timothy Noel Tegge's initial chapter of Miss Loni's "Dutch Treat" story, they will be delighted to follow along as Loni Abeen Van Voorden's foot-juggling performances in nightclubs and cabarets took the variety world by storm.

Those who were in attendance can attest to the recent CHS convention in Trumbull, Connecticut being a resounding success. For those not able to attend, Aíne Norris has provided a superb review of the convention program and activities. Aíne's chronicle serves as the finale to this issue.

To end this column, however, we direct your attention to the adjacent page where we actually present a new beginning. Once in a while, a singular picture, printed graphic or lone artifact comes to light that begs to be shared. Sometimes such worthy treasures endlessly wait for an article to be written that never is. To lessen this deficiency, we present the first edition of Editor's Extras. We hope you discover something special in these previously sequestered inclusions.

Talburt Awarded 2022 Thayer Prize



During the annual banquet at the Circus Historical Society convention in Trumbull, Connecticut, President Bruce Hawley announced that Lane Talburt has been awarded the 2022 Stuart Thayer Prize for his series of articles published in *Bandwagon* titled "John Pugh – A Lifetime with the Circus." Through these articles, Talburt has been recounting Pugh's celebrated career, first as a performer and manager, and then as the long-time owner of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. (later simply named Cole Bros.). Part V of this series appears in this issue of the CHS journal.

The Stuart Thayer Prize is conferred annually, recognizing an exceptional work of circus history scholarship. Congratulations Lane!

Ads for the holiday issue of Bandwagon, #4 2022, must be reserved and content received by October 17.

Save the Date

Circus Historical Society Convention

August 24-27, 2023

Bloomington-Normal, Illinois

The Circus Historical Society will hold its 2023 convention from Thursday August 24 through Sunday August 27, 2023 in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois…home of Illinois State University's Millner Library and the Gamma Phi Circus, the Sweet Corn Circus, and several other circus sites. CHS Trustee and Milner Library Special Collections Librarian Maureen Brunsdale will serve as our convention chair.

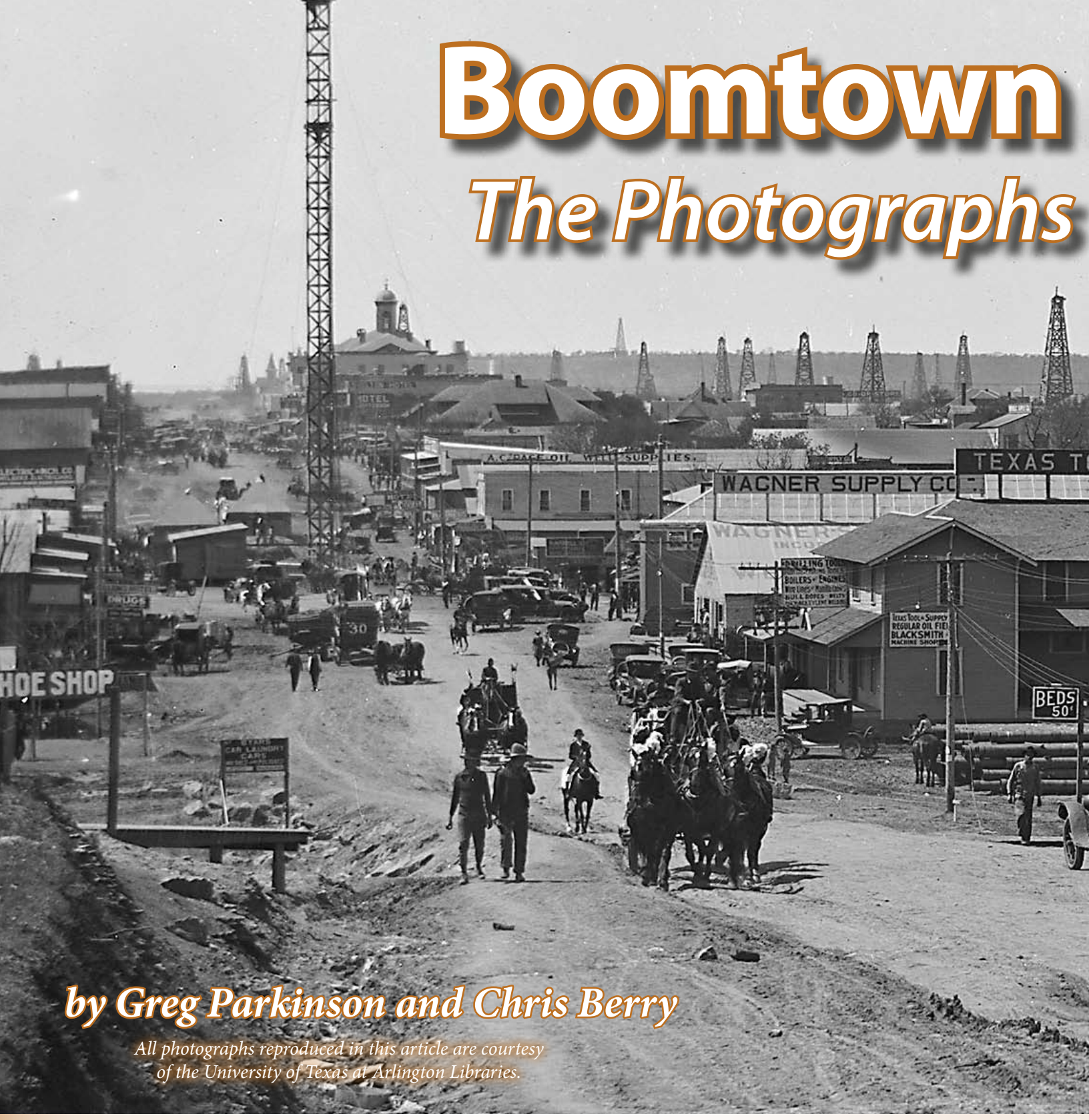
Editor's Extras

The photograph of the Lord George Sanger Gladiator Telescoping Tableau (at right) was taken during a parade in Carmarthen, Wales in 1904. It was drawn by an unusual hitch of ten horses – four wheelers and three on the intermediate and lead teams. In 1899, the wagon had been part of a procession staged for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, giving it a genuine royal accolade. Presumedly, the towering tableau (17′ 0″ high when fully extended as restored) was included with the animals and circus equipment auctioned by Sanger in 1905. Gladiator was acquired by Circus World Museum in 1969.

The Five Graces Bandwagon, pulled by 40 horses, rounded a corner in Warren, Ohio on September 8, 1897. The magnificent parade vehicle was built by Fielding Brothers of New York for Adam Forepaugh during the winter of 1877-1878. Even though Cooper, Barnum and Bailey acquired the Forepaugh show in 1890, the Five Graces continued to be used by the Forepaugh circus through 1893. It was not used by any circus between 1894-1896. For the 1897 season, the bandwagon was transferred to Barnum & Bailey. Although not seen in the photograph, James Thomas was the driver of the 40-horse hitch that year – the first and only time the Five Graces was pulled by the Forty on *The Greatest Show on Earth* in the United States. Before the end of 1897, Barnum & Bailey crossed the Atlantic and began a three-month engagement at London's Olympia in late December. In 1899, James A. Bailey replaced Thomas with Jake Posey who first drove the big team in Birmingham, England. After the European tour ended, the Five Graces was relegated to a secondary parade position, and it was no longer pulled by the Forty. The Five Graces bandwagon may be seen today at The Ringling's Tibbals Learning Center. For a more detailed review of the bandwagon's history, see Richard E. Conover's *The Fielding Bandchariots,* 1969.

Henry Harley Koonce II collection, Warren-Trumbull County Public Library; Warren, Ohio

Boomtown
The Photographs



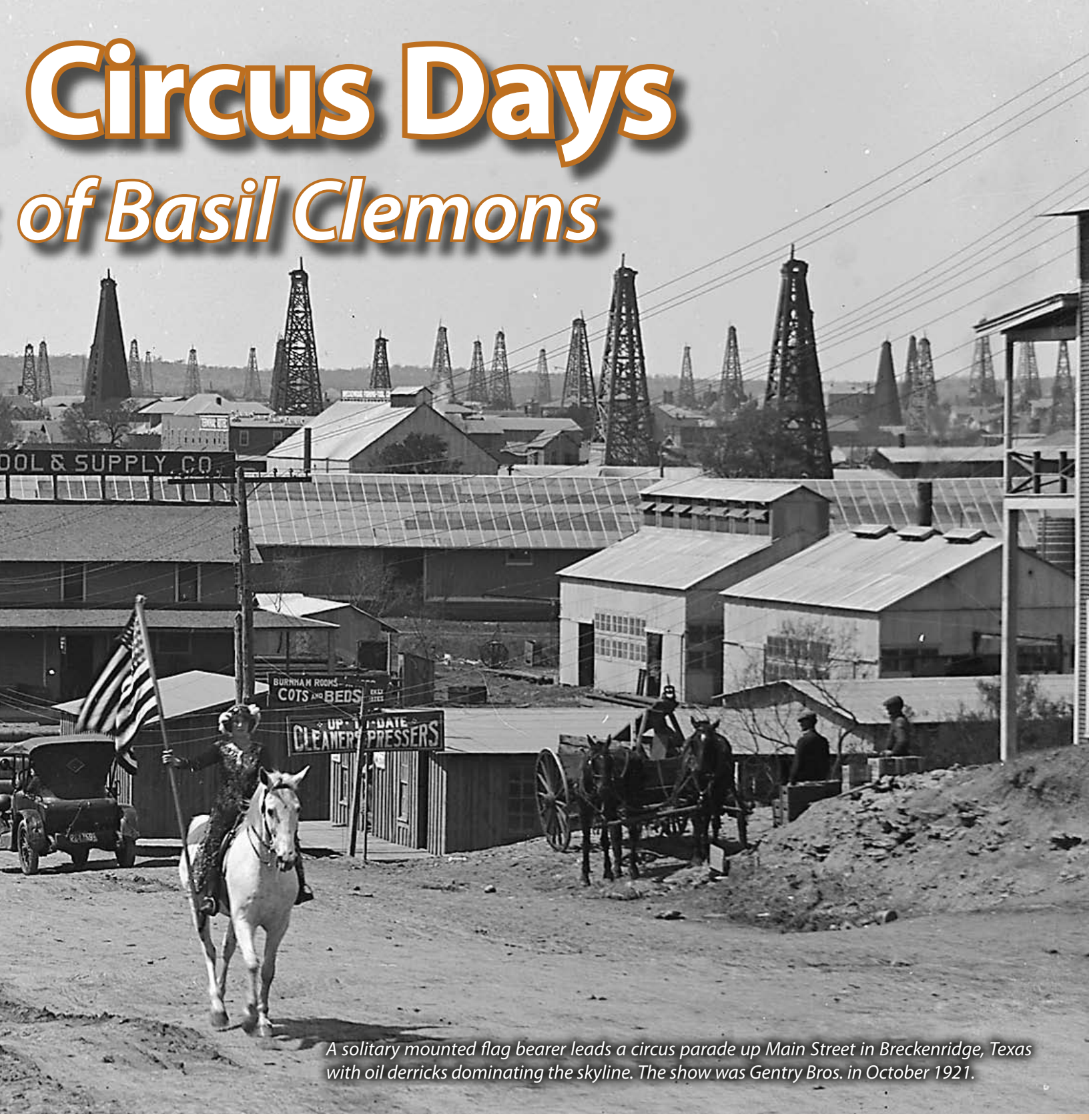
by Greg Parkinson and Chris Berry

All photographs reproduced in this article are courtesy of the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

By all accounts, Basil Clemons was an eccentric individual. He resided most of his life in a former ranch chuckwagon, and he seemed to be just as comfortable taking pictures of rattlesnake hunters as he was with documenting local wedding ceremonies. Like others of his generation, he was drawn to the hullabaloo and excitement of circuses, carnivals and rodeos that came to town. His photographs of the like – sometimes haunting, more often authentic and true-to-life – provide a valuable record of the traveling entertainments that crisscrossed the Pacific Northwest and then Texas during the oil boom days of the 1920s.

Basil Edwin Clemons was born on July 22, 1887 in Lauderdale County, Alabama. While attending grammar school, his father moved the family to Ridgeway, Texas. In 1903, at the impressionable age of 16, Clemons moved to San Francisco and was present there during the earthquake and fire

Circus Days of Basil Clemons



A solitary mounted flag bearer leads a circus parade up Main Street in Breckenridge, Texas with oil derricks dominating the skyline. The show was Gentry Bros. in October 1921.

that destroyed the city in 1906. In Hollywood, he taught himself how to take and develop photographs, and he was there during the early days of motion pictures. Thereafter, he went to Alaska where he used his camera to chronicle the growth of towns in the Yukon River gold rush territory. Allegedly, he brought the first airplane to central Alaska and used it to take the earliest aerial views of the territory. While in Alaska he joined the army, and after being discharged in 1918 moved to Seattle, Washington where he opened his first studio and began taking photographs of circuses that visited the Pacific Northwest.

While traveling with a circus in Texas, Clemons learned that his studio had been destroyed in a fire. Rather than returning to Seattle, he settled in Breckenridge about 95 miles west of Fort Worth and set up a new studio. The little town in north-central Texas was home to a mere 1,800 residents,

but was already teeming with the development of the black gold oil industry. Breckenridge was a boomtown, and in less than a decade its population more than tripled.

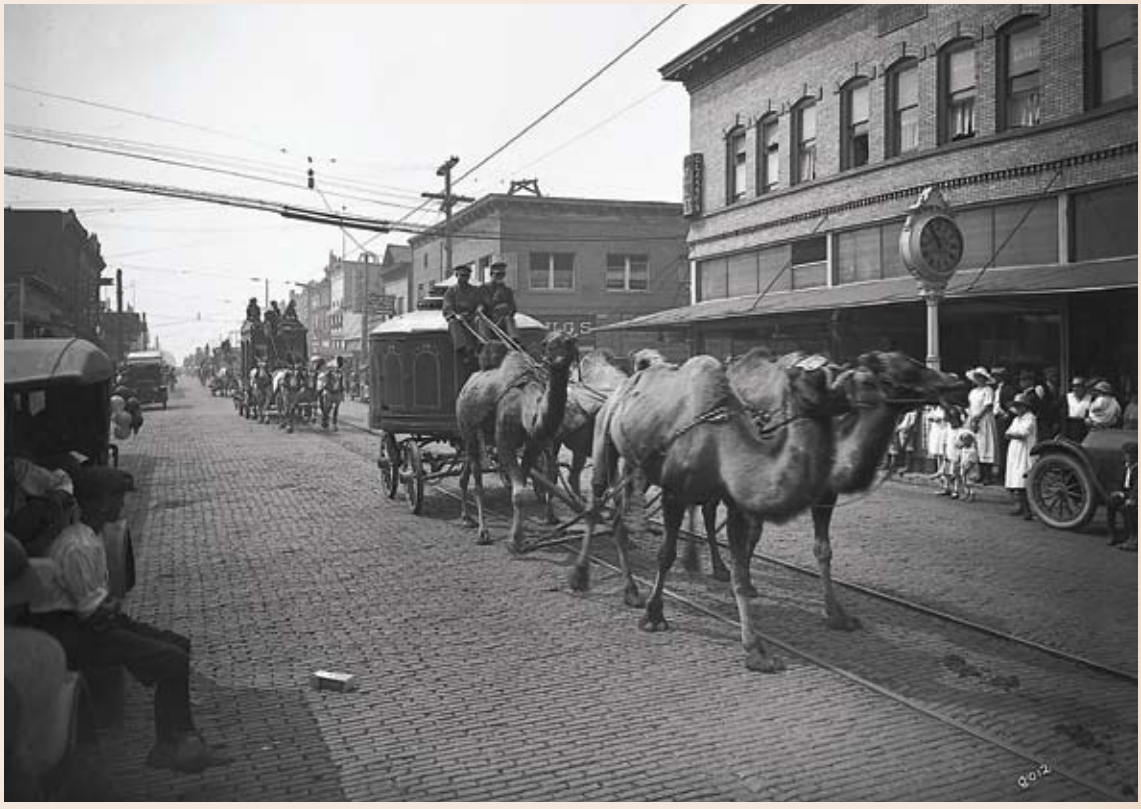
Clemons worked as a commercial photographer in Breckenridge for 30 years. The images selected for this article are dated between 1920 and 1929. The shows he photographed included Al G. Barnes, H. W. Campbell's, Christy Bros., Cole Bros., Gentry Bros., Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Robbins Bros. and no doubt others. Clemons trouped with Sam B. Dill's Circus in 1934, and the next year he took pictures of Bud E. Anderson's Seal Bros. He continued to live in his chuckwagon on land that had once served as an automobile junkyard. Due to poor health and failing eyesight, he gave up photography in 1949. The lifelong bachelor, referred to by one writer as the "boomtown bohemian" died in Breckenridge on June 22, 1964, at the age of 76.

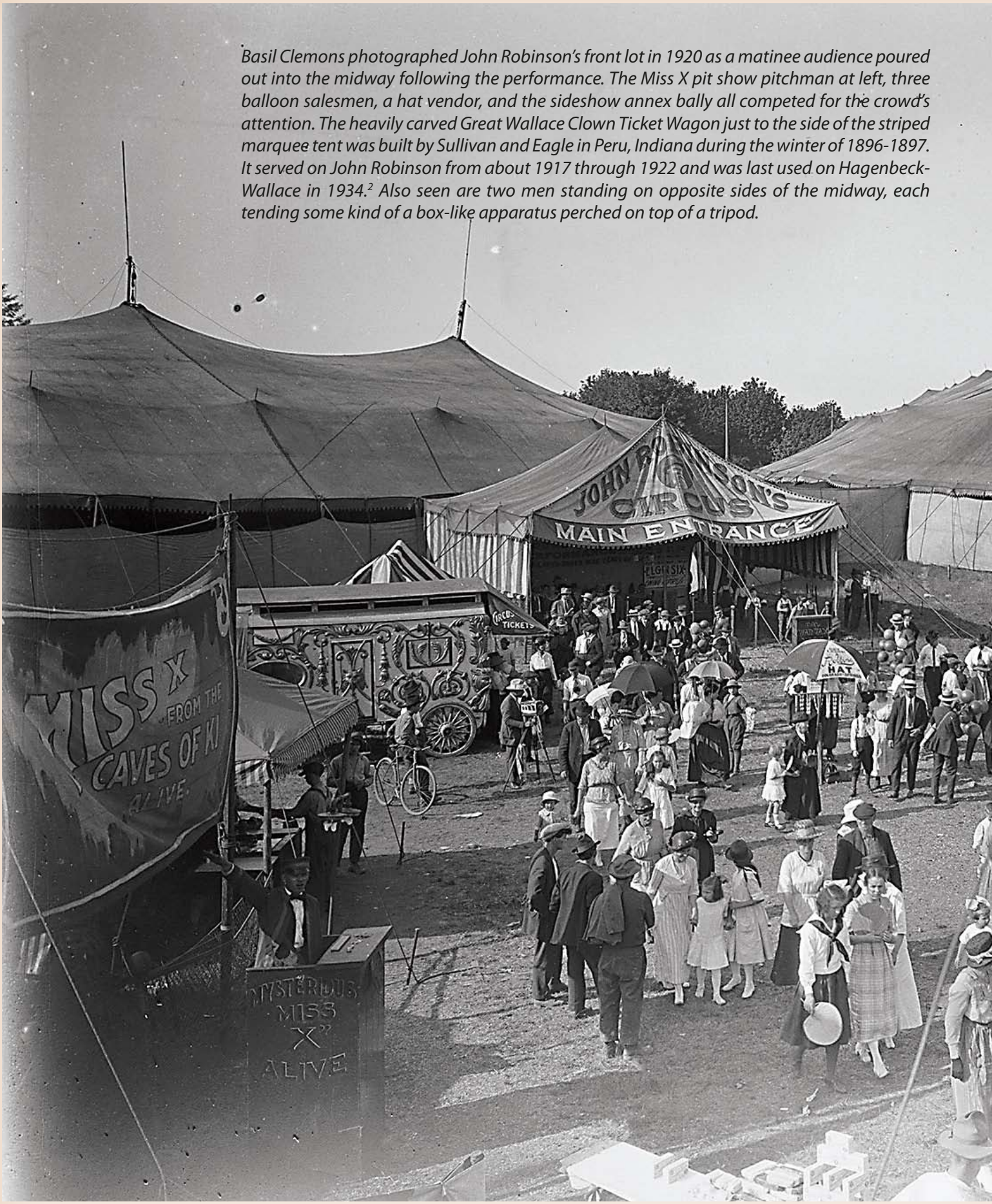
The Special Collections Division of the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries has digitized approximately 5,000 of the Basil Clemons images that were taken between 1920 and 1949. All of these are now available online. BW

An eight-horse hitch pulling a heavily loaded baggage wagon led a procession of John Robinson equipment on its way from the runs to the circus lot. The sign above the building in the background identifies the structure as part of the Great Northern Railroad facilities. The Great Northern ran from Chicago to Seattle, and while the town is not identified, in 1920 Clemons did take photographs of the John Robinson Circus in Washington state. Note the wooden plank roadway that helped keep things moving through the lumber and rail yards during rainy periods.

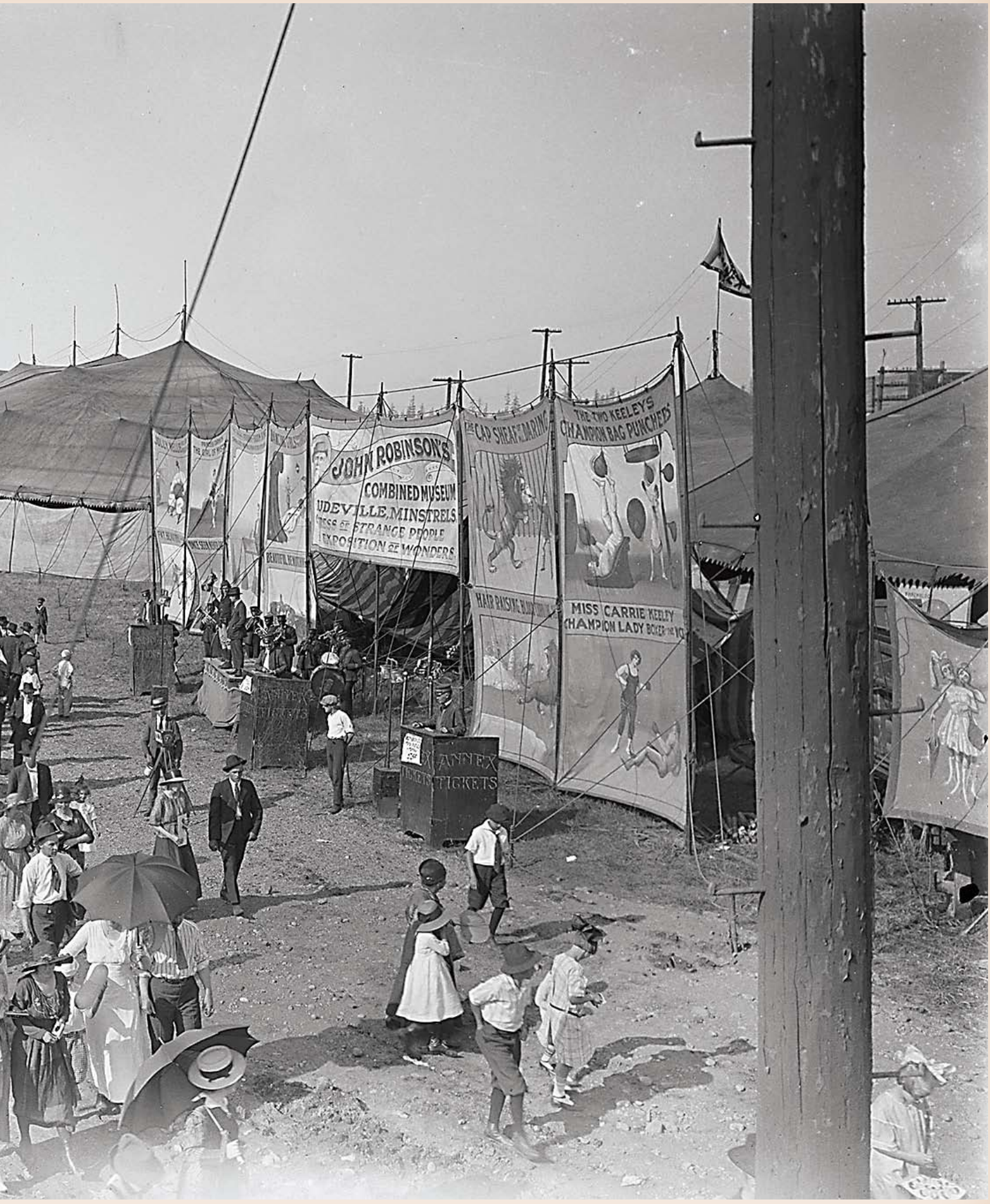
Above, This scene probably taken in 1920 provides evidence of the dry and dusty conditions traveling shows sometimes encountered. Although the circus is John Robinson, the specific location in the Pacific Northwest has not been determined. The image was likely taken by Clemons just before he settled in Breckenridge, Texas.

Below, Perhaps the best photograph in existence of the round John Robinson cottage cage is this one taken on a sunny morning when the circus was in Centralia, Washington in August 1920. The camel hitch was dropped in either 1921 or 1922 when the wagon began to be pulled by horses. This particular cage was not referenced in Richard Conover's book Give 'Em a John Robinson *which shares extensive information about most of the show's other cottage cage wagons.[1] It is also worth noting that Centralia was about 70 miles southwest of Seattle where Clemons had established his studio the year before.*





Basil Clemons photographed John Robinson's front lot in 1920 as a matinee audience poured out into the midway following the performance. The Miss X pit show pitchman at left, three balloon salesmen, a hat vendor, and the sideshow annex bally all competed for the crowd's attention. The heavily carved Great Wallace Clown Ticket Wagon just to the side of the striped marquee tent was built by Sullivan and Eagle in Peru, Indiana during the winter of 1896-1897. It served on John Robinson from about 1917 through 1922 and was last used on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1934.[2] Also seen are two men standing on opposite sides of the midway, each tending some kind of a box-like apparatus perched on top of a tripod.


JOHN ROBINSON'S
COMBINED MUSEUM
UDEVILLE MINSTRELS
EXPOSITION OF WONDERS
THE CAP SHEAF DARING
THE TWO KEELEYS
CHAMPION BAG PUNCHERS
MISS CARRIE KEELEY
ANNEX
TICKETS

This remarkable view inside the John Robinson big top shows Don Montgomery's 26-piece concert band in 1920, the only season the band leader was with the Peru, Indiana circus. The next two years he was with Sells-Floto, and he led the band on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1923. Note the star-back seating in the background.

In 1921, the Christy Bros. performance included "Dancing in the Lion's Den by Miss Glenn." Her full name was Gertrude Glenn Dennis. George W. Christy wintered his show in Houston, Texas throughout the 1920s.

When this photograph was taken on March 19, 1921, the H. W. Campbell's United Shows was a 25-car railroad carnival that also featured a circus and wild west show. Even though the carnival would typically spend a week in each town, its street parade was held each day. This bandwagon was first used on the Sells Bros. circus.[3]

The musicians and cowboys of H. W. Campbell's "South American Real Wild West" were lined up on the midway in March of 1921. According to The Billboard, *the stand in Breckenridge, Texas was one of the most successful of the season.*[4]

This group of subdued-looking itinerants includes a clown with a rooster perched on his thumb. Gentry Bros. Shows played Breckenridge, Texas on October 20, 1921.

This photograph of future big band leader Harry James was taken when Christy Bros. Circus was in Breckenridge in 1922. His father, Everett, led the 15-piece band and his mother Mabel performed as an aerialist. Six-year-old Harry was featured on drums during the post-performance concert, and not long after this photograph was taken the youngster began taking trumpet lessons.[5] Harry James shot to fame during the swing era, and by the time of his death in 1983 he had sold millions of records worldwide.

Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus made a splash in downtown Breckenridge with its parade in 1926. Note that the fourth unit in the procession consisted of two small open cage wagons being towed in tandem by a motorized tractor.

C. H. Baudendistel "Major High Pockets" Elephant Educator and
Originator of the Above Trick. Showing How Easily An
Elephant Can Take A Mans Head In Its Mouth and Life Him Up

C. H. "High Pockets" Baudendistel demonstrated the "elephant head carry" when Robbins Bros. Circus was in Breckenridge, Texas in 1926. Several other trainers, including Frank "Cheerful" Gardner also performed the trick, however "High Pockets" may have been the originator. Although huge crowds turned out to see the show in Breckenridge,[6] within days the show experienced a string of rainouts that forced it to close early and return to winter quarters in Granger, Iowa.[7]

The full range of duties of the Al G. Barnes train crew was on display when Clemons took this magnificent photograph in his hometown on October 26, 1927. The snubber, standing just below the puma cage, eases the first wagon of the cut down the runs as the poler labors to align the front wheels of an extravagantly lettered vehicle. The teamster at the far right already has

The photographer posed these two young performers on the Al G. Barnes lot in Breckenridge in 1927. They were simply identified as "Matlock," but more specifically were acrobats Maude and Berta Matlock.

his pair of horses peeling around to double back for the next cage wagon. Also of note, the Mt. Vernon Car Mfg. Co. flatcar represented the new era of rail transportation, the first such steel cars having been manufactured only six years earlier.

Stella Smith styled for the local photographer when Al G. Barnes Circus made an appearance in Breckenridge during the fall of 1927. The charming bareback rider was a member of the Stirk-Davenport Troupe.[8]

In this iconic circus setup scene that Clemons shot on a John Robinson lot in the early 1920s, men and boys joined forces to spread canvas as the tent boss oversaw the operation. The Red Crown and Standard Oil Company signs on the horizon reminds us that this was Texas oil country.

A mechanical stake driver wagon skirted the perimeter of the tent area as an elephant in the distance raised the center poles that would support the big top. John Robinson last played Texas in 1924.

The cooks and waiters of the John Robinson Circus took a break from their chores to pose for photographer Basil Clemons in the early 1920s.

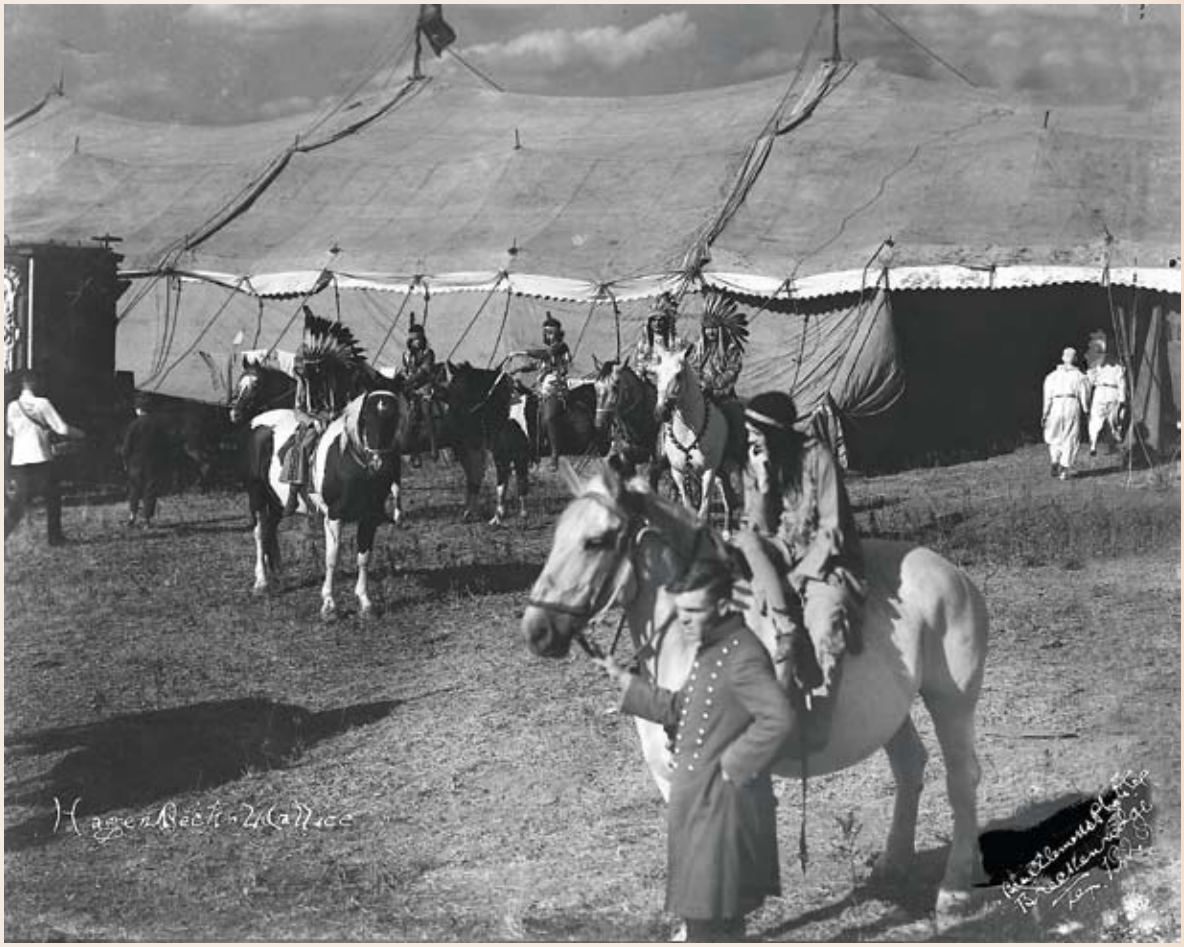
This unidentified circus lot was a sea of mud when the John Robinson arrived in town. Although performances were most likely given that day, due to the sloppy conditions, no menagerie tent was set up.

Dozens of local residents were treated to a free show on the John Robinson midway as one of the show's elephants extracts a touring car that had become mired in the mud.

The strong voice of the side show orator is almost audible in this view of the bally for "John Robinson's Combined Museum, Vaudeville, Minstrels, Congress of Strange People and Exposition of Wonders." The date and location of this image are unknown.

Endnotes

1. Richard E. Conover, *Give 'Em a John Robinson* (Xenia, Ohio: Richard E. Conover, 1965).
2. Fred Dahlinger, "The Great Wallace Clown Ticket Wagon, *Bandwagon,* Jan.-Feb. 1983, pp. 34 and 35.
3. "Campbell's United Shows," *The Billboard,* Feb. 19, 1921, p. 73.
4. "H. W. Campbell's Shows," *The Billboard,* Oct. 29, 1921, p. 108.
5. "Christy Bros. Shows," *The Billboard,* Mar. 25, 1921, p. 62.
6. "Robbins Bros. Show Not To Appear Here," *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, Texas), Oct. 13, 1926, p. 1.
7. Joseph Bradbury, "Robbins Bros. Circus, Part IV, The 1926 Season," *Bandwagon,* Sept-Oct. 1981, p. 17.
8. Al G. Barnes Official Route Book, 1927, pp. 7 and 21.



Native Americans and others portraying American Indians who performed in the Hagenbeck-Wallace "AfterShow" were photographed in the backyard of the circus on October 10, 1929. Only three weeks earlier, John Ringling had purchased the American Circus Corporation and its five shows.

Grift, Gambling and Girls

Gollmar Bros. 1922

by Chris Berry

Gollmar Bros. was one of four circuses operated by the American Circus Corporation in 1922. The respected title was leased from the Gollmar family and painted on equipment that had been used by Howes Great London the previous season.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

It was late in the evening when the sheriff left the hospital room and began the 30-mile drive from Memphis to Earle, Arkansas. In an instant the excitement and joy of circus day had been transformed to a scene of terror, as the crack of gunfire was heard on the midway. Before the night was over, a deputy sheriff was in custody. The next day he was charged with murder.

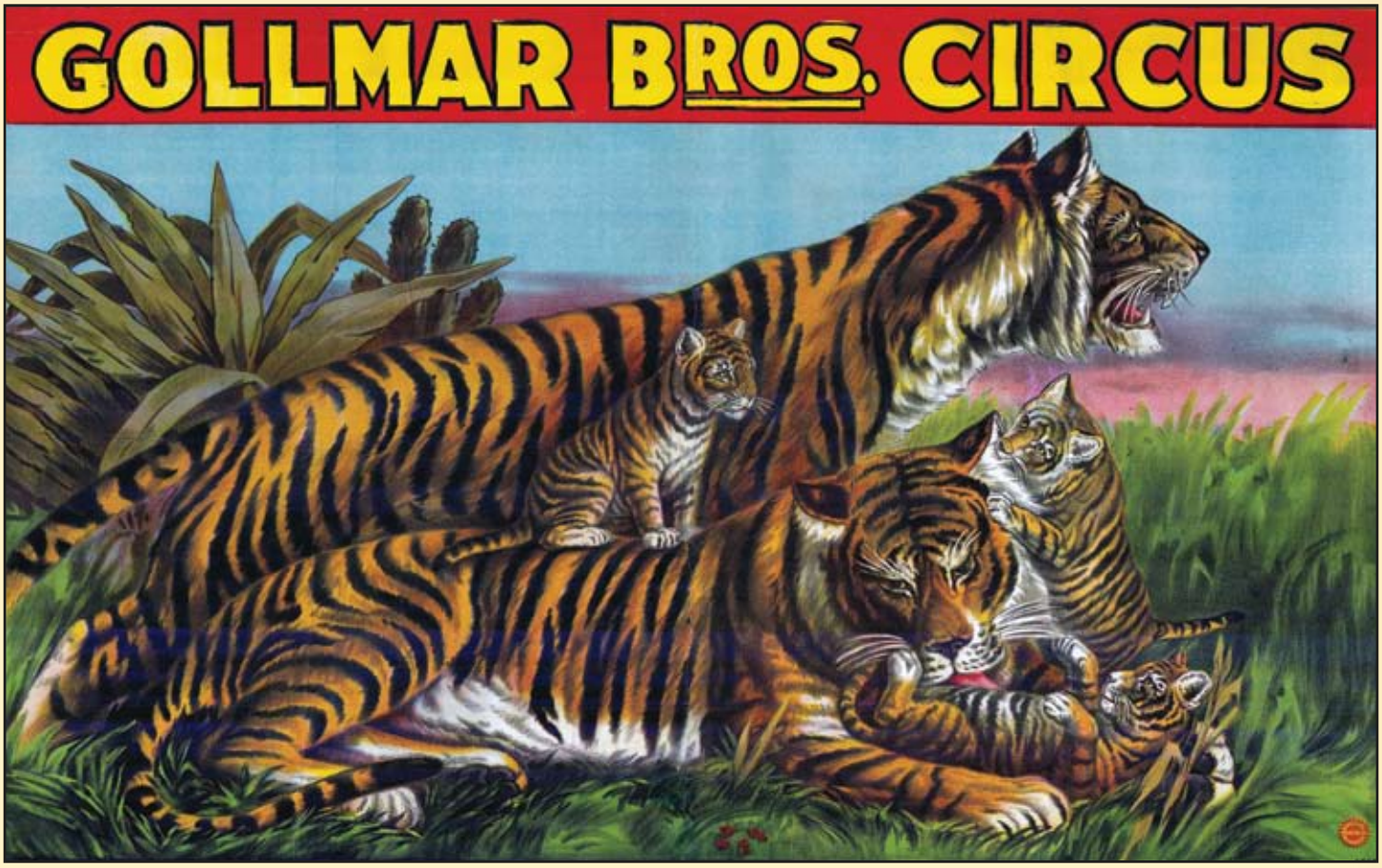
The pleasant autumn weather on October 23, 1922, had brought a large crowd to the showgrounds in Northeast Arkansas. As the residents of Earle gathered for the evening performance of the Gollmar Bros. Circus, one of the Crittenden County deputies, Ernest Putnam, began complaining about gambling devices and other "objectionable" content in the sideshow. As Putnam's voice grew louder, Billy Miles, the show's legal adjuster, was called to the tent.

After a brief conversation, the fixer was able to persuade the officer to leave the sideshow, but as they were exiting, the argument flared up again and the deputy fired one shot. The bullet tore into Miles' abdomen.[1]

Forty years after Billy Miles was shot on the Arkansas circus lot, Fred Gollmar was recounting his long career in show business when he told an interviewer that during the years he and his brothers operated the circus, "we never ran any gambling devices or anything of that kind."[2]

But in 1922, the Gollmars no longer owned the show which carried their name. The circus the five Gollmar brothers had started in 1891 had closed six years earlier, and the valuable title had been leased to veteran showmen Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers and Edward

"grift":
verb: to obtain (money or property) illicitly (as in a confidence game)
noun: a petty or small-scale swindle



There were seven wild animal acts on the Gollmar Bros. program in 1922. A number of exotic animals were born while the circus was in winter quarters and the new additions to the menagerie were promoted throughout the season.

Chris Berry Collection

Ballard. The three had consolidated their various shows into what became the American Circus Corporation.

The Gollmars, and their cousins the Ringling brothers, had built a reputation with their "Sunday School Shows," free of grift and swindlers who traveled with some circuses and who were often accused of luring customers into their sideshows with games of chance and other questionable entertainment.[4] [5]

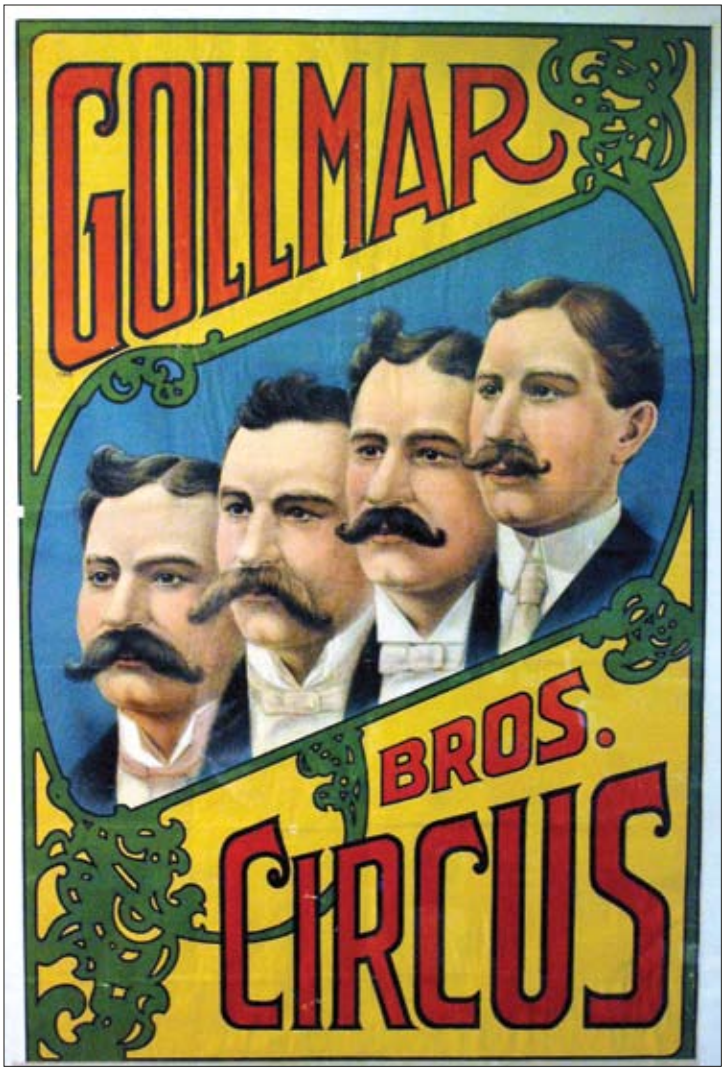
Like the Ringlings, the Gollmars had an impeccable image, and just before Christmas 1921 Fred Gollmar visited the Chicago office of *The Billboard* and revealed that a show bearing his family name would be returning to the road in the spring. The announcement did not mention the new relationship with the American Circus Corporation. Gollmar merely told the writer that the show would tour in the spring on 25 railroad cars.[6]

The stock cars, flats and sleepers that would carry the Gollmar name were not new, nor was the circus. The wagons, animals, and management – as well as many of the performers – had been part of Howes Great London Circus in 1921. Mugivan and Bowers had first used the Howes title in 1908, yet with merely the stroke of a pen, Howes became Gollmar. Many of the people were the same, as was the equipment. In fact, the baggage wagons retained the same color scheme that Howes had used in 1921, orange with white trim and brown letters. Only the title was new.

A few weeks after the announcement, *The Billboard* disclosed the new relationship between the American Circus Corporation and the Gollmar family. The muti-faceted deal included an arrangement with Mike Golden, a showman who had purchased the Palmer Bros. Circus at a sheriff's sale in Palo Alto, California. According to the newspaper, Golden had leased the Howes title from the American Circus Corporation for 1922. As part of the arrangement Palmer also acquired the Howes Great London lithographs and other advertising that was on the shelves at the Riverside Printing Company in Milwaukee.

The article continued with the fact that the Gollmar title was already being painted on the Howes wagons and railroad cars at the show's winter quarters in Montgomery, Alabama, and revealed that Fred Gollmar had taken the position of general agent and traffic manager. His expertise would prove valuable as the circus was routed into much of the original Gollmar territory, including the upper Midwest as well as Wisconsin, where the circus started 30 years before.[7]

Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard were not the first showmen to capitalize on the sterling reputation forged by the Gollmars. When the original Gollmar circus closed in 1916,



Although there were originally five Gollmar Bros., Jacob died in 1896, shortly after the show first began. This artwork, which was originally used in 1915, was brought back for the 1922 season. The portrait of the four brothers, and their mustaches, reminded some of advertising used to promote the circus owned by their cousins, the Ringlings.

Ralph D. and Joan M. Pierce Collection

James Patterson, a showman from Paola, Kansas, purchased the physical assets and made a deal to use the respected title for one season. In 1917 the circus was billed as the Gollmar Bros. and James Patterson Trained Wild Animal Shows.[8]

Even though Patterson had only used the name for one season, in February 1922 the Gollmar brothers proactively placed an advertisement in *The Billboard* which explained the new lease arrangement with "Howes Great London Show Company" (a subsidiary of the American Circus Corporation). The advertisement cautioned that if any other circus used the title, there would be legal action.[9]

The strongly worded warning may have been prophetic. Although Patterson had focused on his carnival during the five years that the Gollmar title was dormant, he did return to the circus business in 1922. The 20-car railroad show was billed at James Patterson's Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus, and while Patterson had sold some of the original Gollmar equipment to Al G. Barnes, the circus that he framed in 1922 included wagons and other equipment that he had acquired six years earlier.[10]

By mid-January, the entertainment trade publications were filled with advertisements recruiting showgirls for the upcoming season. The ads said that preference would be given to "those having circus experience and being able to ride high school horses, do swinging ladders or being willing to learn the same."[11]

As showgirls and others were hired, the Montgomery winter quarters was bustling. The new show was being framed at Vandiver Park, the same fairgrounds where Howes Great London first wintered in 1912.[12] A decade later, as the

The 1922 program included a group of trained polar bears presented by Dorothy Asal. The bears were cared for by Clyde Beatty during his first full season with a circus. Late in the season Beatty presented the polar bear act during Asal's absence. Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

The first performance of the Gollmar Bros. Circus of 1922 was held in Montgomery, Alabama over Easter weekend. The shows were a benefit for the local Shriners.

new show was preparing for the 1922 season, veteran showman Theo. Forestall was on hand in his role as an auditor for the new Gollmar Bros. "There was first class equipment and performance, like all the Corporation shows," he recalled. "Even so, it was the smallest of the four outfits they had that year, so we got mostly the small towns."

Forestall remembered that the Gollmar performance was presented in two end rings with a steel arena in the center that remained up throughout the performance. The head animal trainer was John "Chubby" Guilfoyle who was assisted by a young cage boy named Clyde Beatty. Forestall said that while the show was in winter quarters Guilfoyle also put the teenager in charge of a group of about six polar bears that were presented by Dorothy Asal.[13]

The polar bears, as well as big cats, were key features of the show. Seven wild animal acts appeared on the program and the menagerie was filled with exotic animals including three baby lions, two pumas and a camel that had been born in winter quarters.[14]

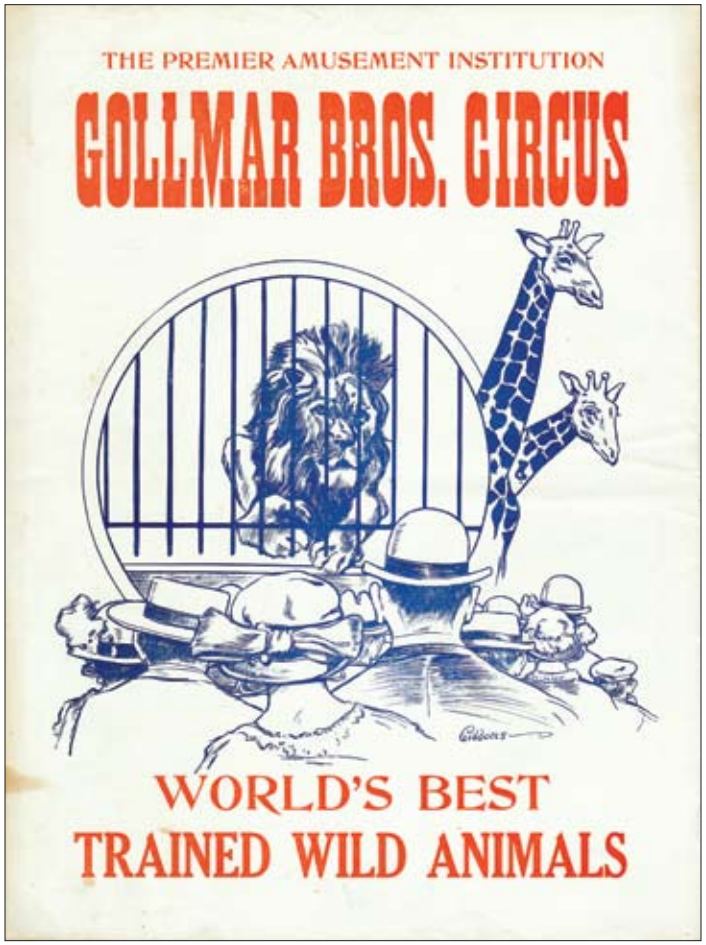
By mid-April, the new circus was ready for the season premiere, sponsored by Montgomery's Alcazar Shrine Temple, and presented over Easter weekend.

The opening spectacle was titled "Peter Pan in Animal Land," and among those who saw the show that season was longtime circus historian Joe Fleming who recalled that Henry Wingert's big show band played *The Sheik of Araby* during the pageant. The song was a popular hit in 1922 and had been composed following the success of Rudolph Valentino's blockbuster film, *The Sheik*. During the grand entry, each member of the Gollmar Bros. cast marched around the hippodrome track ringing a bell, beating a drum or hitting a piece of metal with a mallet. Fleming said, "It was a most colorful, musical and 'loud sounding' spec."[15]

"Peter Pan in Animal Land" starred Chubby Guilfoyle's wife Harriett as Wendy, and Julien Rogers was the prima donna. Joe Metcalf was the elephant superintendent, Eunice DeMott was the principal female rider, the Morales family performed on the tight wire and the Greer sisters performed an iron jaw act. The equestrian director was Charles Barry who also presented a liberty act with 15 thoroughbred horses.[16]

Shortly before America's circuses and carnivals left their winter quarters to begin the 1922 outdoor season, the United Mine Workers launched a nationwide strike which resulted in coal shortages and increased prices. All of the railroad shows were affected by the strike which created delays and cancellations throughout the season.

After Gollmar Bros. opened in Montgomery it moved to Birmingham, the former home of circus general manager



An artist identified only as "Gibbons" created artwork that was used on the program/songster that was sold by the circus in 1922. Tegge Circus Archives

Danny Odom. "I was glad that Birmingham was our first stop after leaving winter quarters in Montgomery," Odom told a local reporter. "Birmingham has the reputation of being a good show town, a good place for the tented exhibitions and we had anticipated doing a splendid business." He then spoke of his expectations for the season, outlining the route that would take the show through the upper Midwest and to the Rocky Mountains. "We have two trains," he said, "and when the performance is ironed out, we expect to be able to give a very interesting and enjoyable show."[17]

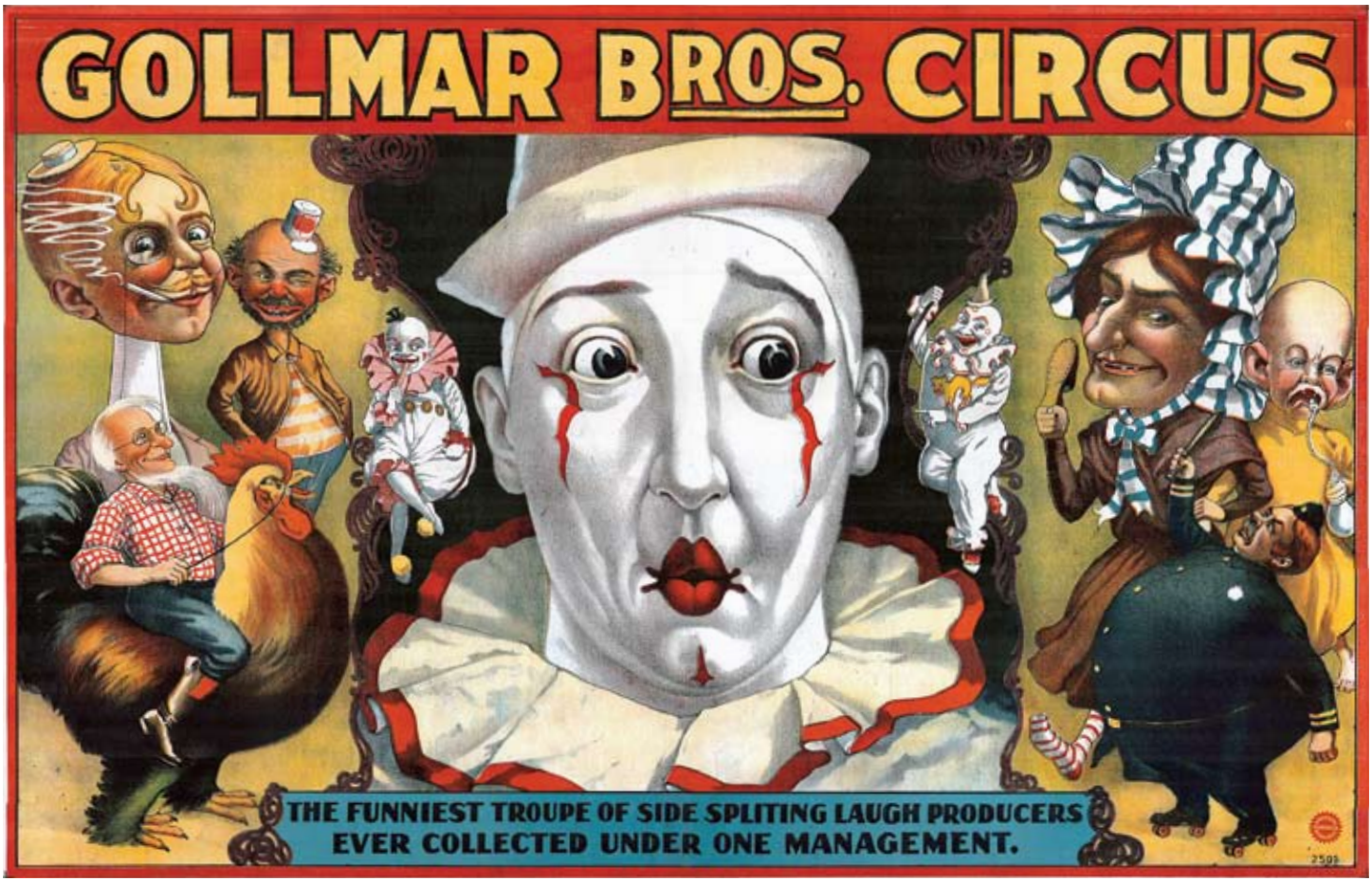
Odom had more than a passing interest in the financial success of the circus, as he was also a minority stockholder in the show's parent organization. When stock certificates for the new American Circus Corporation were issued on December 14, 1921, 437 shares were granted to "Charles D. Odoni," Danny Odom's legal name.[18]

Odom's perspective on the new season may have been bolstered when the circus arrived in Huntsville the next day. The local newspaper reported that the parade was one of the best ever, and the program was far above average. The reviewer said:

> "In watching the performance of the Gollmar Bros. Circus, one is given the impression from the very start to finish the watchword in the construction of this vast amusement enterprise has been to give the public 'that which is different.' The local verdict is that Gollmar Bros. circus, while not the largest, was the best they ever saw and those who did see the performance have spent a good portion of the day trying to tell those who did not see it how much they missed."[19]

From Huntsville the show headed north. Early on the morning of April 22, as the circus was leaving Florence, Alabama for Columbia, Tennessee, the last sleeper car on the train uncoupled and rolled for about 25 blocks before it derailed and left the track. Although there were 35 people in the car, none was seriously injured. The railroad provided two extra coaches so that the circus could reach Columbia in time.[20]

Less than two weeks after the show premiered in the capital of Alabama, it had already made its way to Vincennes, Indiana where the editor of the local newspaper wrote, "The old saying, 'when one has seen a circus one has seen them all,' does not hold good unless one has seen Gollmar's. Bigger circuses have exhibited but considering size none have been better." He added that although the performance was



Many of the posters used by Gollmar Bros. in 1922 were "stock" images that were created by the Riverside Printing Company of Milwaukee. Because the title was only used that one season, examples of advertising used by the circus are rare.

Tegge Circus Archives

first-rate, ticket sales were poor because the coal mine strike kept many of the local miners and their families from attending.[21]

That was not the case two days later when a representative from *The Billboard* made note that the tents were packed as the audience witnessed, "an excellent performance of trained domestic and wild animals along with circus acts." The reporter also wrote that the sideshow did big business, and the lineup included an 18-person band, along with a sword walker, magician, mind reader, fire-eater and knife throwers.[22]

On the same day that the circus moved from Indiana into Illinois, the yellow advance car that carried 30 billposters, bannermen and advertising agents,[23] arrived in St. Louis. It was the first time that any of the Gollmar shows had ever appeared in the Gateway City. According to one of the billposters, a small crowd gathered as he began pasting a lithograph to the side of a wall. When he unfolded one of the posters and revealed the portraits of the four original Gollmar brothers, one of the bystanders, "enlightened the rest of the spectators with the remark, 'This is just the old Ringling Bros. Show under a new title.' "[24]

The circus was definitely not Ringling Bros., but the Gollmar route was comparable to that of a much larger show, and many of its jumps were long. Only one month into the tour, the show was in Kansas where a local newspaper reported that "farmers for miles around left their plows in the field, cranked up the flivver and brought the family to Leavenworth to attend the circus." Public schools were dismissed shortly before 11:00 A.M. so that school children could join the thousands who lined the streets to see the parade.[25]

By 1922 many circuses had abandoned the daily march, but those that continued the practice were rewarded. When Gollmar Bros. appeared in Garden City, Kansas, observers said "The parade was one of the best ever in this city and was different from most circus parades in that the animals were exhibited to view, and their cages were not closed by wooden doors as is usually the case."[26] According to those who watched from the street, a Mack truck pulled the steam calliope as it played contemporary hit songs such as *Dardenella* and *Last Night on the Back Porch.* There was also an air calliope that was pulled by six ponies.[27]

From Kansas the show made its way into Colorado where it played day and date with the Wortham carnival in Pueblo. Opposition with the Al G. Barnes Circus soon followed as the routes of the two shows repeatedly crossed paths. Sometimes Barnes arrived first in a new town, other times it was the Gollmar show.

The circus was in Denver on Memorial Day where the performers and working men marked the occasion amidst bunting, draped flags and fern centerpieces that decorated the tables of the dining tent. During the two-day stand, several members of the troupe made a pilgrimage to the grave of Buffalo Bill Cody, and a group of local showfolks made their way to the circus lot, including Harry Tammen, one of the founders of Sells-Floto and publisher of *The Denver Post.*[28]

Some of those who turned out for the Gollmar Bros. parade in 1922 described it as "the best ever."
Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

Despite bad weather that included a hailstorm in Colorado Springs and snow in Cheyenne, Wyoming, the show continued to do fair business with a performance supported by a clown alley that featured Joe Greer and his mule, as well as Bill Stiles and Abe Goldstein portraying his classic clown cop.[29]

During the performance Goldstein appeared on the hippodrome track with a hippopotamus named Victor that was led by young Clyde Beatty. According to Goldstein the three would make their way around the tent, the clown walking ahead of the hippo which was guided by Beatty. "Every time I stopped, the hip would bite me on the butt, then I would throw bran in his mouth," he recalled. "I used to tip Clyde two dollars a week for working with me."[30]

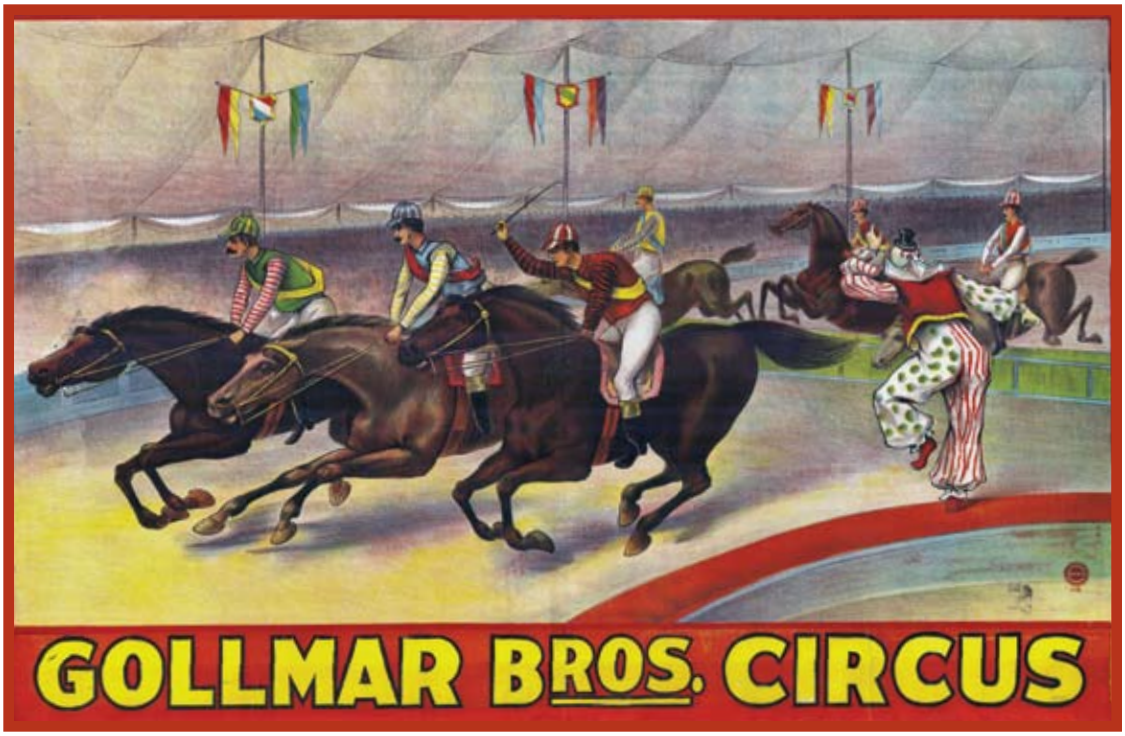
While the show was in Columbus, Nebraska, veteran equestrian William DeMott wrote, "After seven weeks viewing the Gollmar Bros. Circus and paying strict attention to every detail, I believe I am justified to make the following known: A finer equipped show in all its branches is hard to

The Gollmar Bros. parade was widely praised, however, railroad delays frequently affected the circus' arrival, and late in the season the colorful pageant was often cancelled. Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

find. Its executive staff, under the personal observation and management of Dan Odom, is most complete, fast and in perfect harmony. The parade is excellent and the show's appearance on the lot cannot be surpassed for cleanliness. The program offers two hours of novelty animal acts and high-class circus acts combined that bring forth remarks of approval for all that is claimed and that accounts for the remarkable good business and grand record the Gollmar Show enjoys." On the afternoon that DeMott wrote his letter the tent was filled to capacity.[31]

From Nebraska the route took the show back across Iowa and into Illinois. The circus arrived in Waukegan on June 22, the same day that Governor Len Small went on trial there, accused of embezzling more than a half-million dollars in state funds. If that was not enough stress, in Southern Illinois deadly violence had erupted among striking coal miners and the Governor was considering sending the National Guard to restore order.

Despite the heavy burdens he carried that day, Governor Small left all of them behind when he and his son, along with two other young children, made their way to the circus. According to those in the big top that night, the sight of the Governor "splitting his sides laughing" and "watch-



Hippodrome races were still an important part of the Gollmar Bros. Circus in 1922. During the aftershow, George Hackenschmidt, the heavyweight world champion wrestler, would take on local challengers in the circus ring. Chris Berry Collection

ing his constant applause" indicated that "there was not any man, woman or child who enjoyed the circus as much as he did." When the performance ended the Governor said, "It was surely one of the finest shows that I have ever attended," adding "It was a performance which any parent could well take his children because there was so much of educational value as well as entertainment."[32]

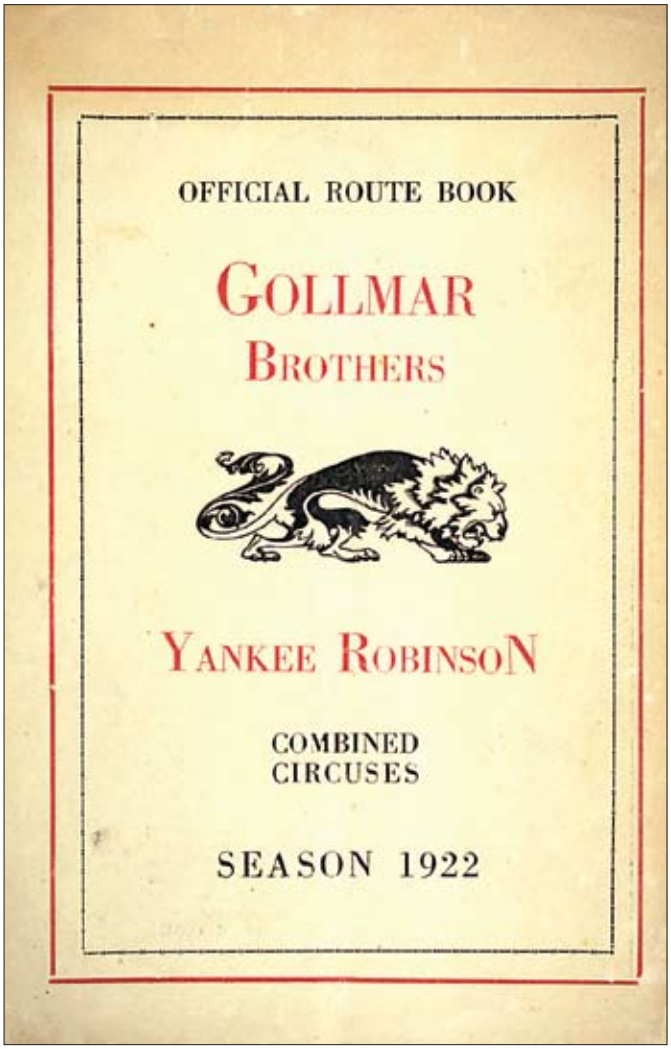
That performance included an exceptional cast of female circus artists, and the show's press agents touted their contributions as novel and newsworthy. "In the rings, in the air, and in the wild animal arenas the show takes pride in featuring women performers and trainers," the press releases crowed, adding, "the spectator will be struck by their air of happy eagerness as they go through their offerings [with] their refreshingly wholesome appearance."[33]

As summer temperatures began to climb, the circus train headed north and into the Gollmars' home state of Wisconsin, where four baby elephants joined the show in Stevens Point on June 28. Three days later, striking coal miners were joined by 400,000 railroad workers who walked off the job in a massive nationwide strike. Although conductors, engineers, firemen and brakemen did not join the walkout, the strike by 16 other unions made up of maintenance workers caused significant railroad delays all summer.

Despite the labor unrest, the circus trains continued to roll into familiar territory long associated with the original Gollmar Bros. Circus. When the show arrived in Devil's Lake, North Dakota on July 8, the parade coincided with a major bootlegging trial at the county courthouse. Despite the serious nature of the proceedings, when the first notes of Henry Wingert's band made their way through the open windows, many of those, including key witnesses, abandoned the courtroom drama and joined the throngs already assembled on the street. The judge realized he had lost control of the proceedings and recessed the trial until after the parade had passed. Both performances of the circus in Devil's Lake were turnaways.[34]

Joe Fleming, a long-time member of the Circus Historical Society, recalled a fast-moving performance in McCook, Nebraska, and decades later remembered that the show made a nice appearance both on the circus grounds and along the parade route.

"I was particularly enthused with a cream-colored horse which was in the Wild West department and with the five beautiful black and white spotted ones," he said, adding, "a couple of these spotted horses appeared in an act with a couple of camels, which was a new act to me at that time." He also described "a four-hog hitch" which pulled a wagon around the hippodrome track at breakneck speed. During the performance he said, "The Morales family made a big hit with their tight wire act and looked fine with a beautiful pink wardrobe. They were featured with special paper on the big daubs that appeared on the livery barns and board fences all over town."[35]



On August 1 the "Yankee Robinson" name was added to the Gollmar Bros. title. The "Combined Circus" was promoted for the remainder of the 1922 season and the expanded title was included in the 1922 Route Book.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

One of the added attractions that was promoted during the Gollmar Bros. "after show" in 1922, was a wrestling match in which circus strongman, George Hackenschmidt, took on local wrestlers. The circus promised two dollars for every minute the challenger stayed in the ring. At one time, Hackenschmidt was widely known as professional wrestling's first heavyweight champion.[36] However, by 1922 he was 50 years old, and his best days were behind him.

When the circus was in Willmar, Minnesota on July 12, a local wrestler, identified only as "Samuelson," took on the champ. During the afternoon performance the local boy was able to stay in the ring for 15 minutes, earning $30. That night there was a rematch and the hometown favorite pinned Hackenschmidt to the ground after eight minutes. According to one of those in attendance, the circus strongman seemed afraid of Samuelson and ran off the mat several times.[37]

By the end of July, the show had only missed one per-

formance, however the railroad and coal strikes soon caused major railroad delays. The first was in Nebraska City when the circus train did not arrive until noon. The show had made a 100-mile jump from Fairbury, Nebraska, and while the parade was cancelled, the working men were able to get the tents up and both performances were given.

The next day was worse. While it was only 100 miles to the small town of Wahoo, Nebraska, the first wagons did not start rolling off the train until after two o'clock in the afternoon. Even though there was only time to give one show, that evening the big top was packed. The delays continued the next day when the train did not arrive in the town of Ida Grove until after 3:00 P.M. Fortunately, it was a Sunday and since there was no performance scheduled, no money was lost.

Railroad slowdowns hounded the circus throughout the summer as more parades were cancelled and performances delayed. Soon the future of the operation was in question. With three months still remaining in the season *Variety* made the prediction that Gollmar Bros. would lose money that season, and at best break even.[38]

Whether it was to bolster attendance, or another reason, the show was renamed as Gollmar Bros. and Yankee Robinson Combined Circuses on August 1.[39] Although there was no definitive explanation why the old showman's name was tacked onto the title midseason, it should be noted that Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard had acquired the Yankee Robinson name from Fred Buchanan at the end of the 1920 season along with several wagons and elephants.[40]

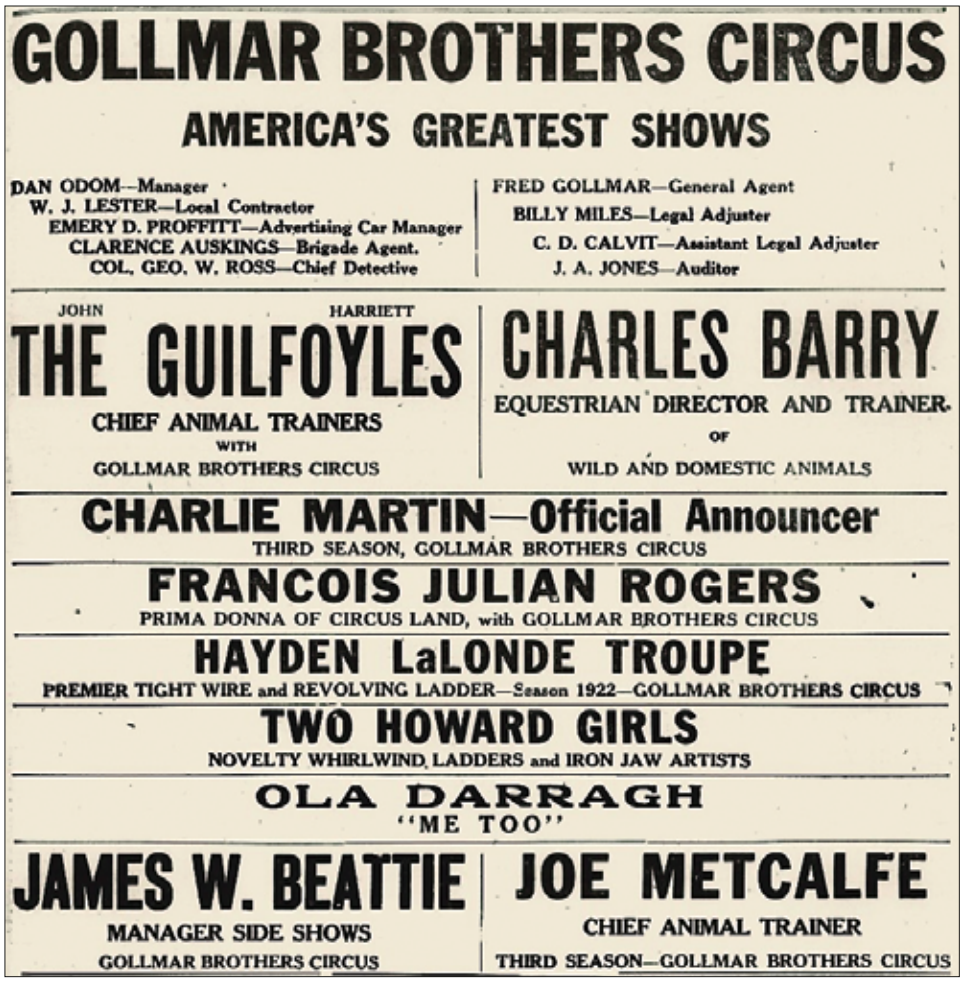
The circus arrived in Beloit, Wisconsin on August 24, the same day that the American Legion was holding its state convention in the city. The show participated in the big American Legion parade that day and more than 200 veterans attended the show.

One of those who was at that performance was longtime CHS member Charles Kitto. One of his recollections was the sideshow, and even though he was young at the time, he was able to pick out the grifters who were working in the sideshow. He also remembered "cooch dancers" who teased an extra performance that would be presented for men and boys behind a curtain. Kitto said that despite the high-pressure pitch, he took the advice of an older gentleman who told him not to waste his money on a ticket, as the "blowoff" was a "fake."[41]

Despite the illegal activities that were apparently happening in sideshows, the circus press agents constantly told local editors that Gollmar Bros. was – in their words – a "Sunday School Show." In the days prior to the circus arrival, newspapers featured stories which described how clean and chaste the show was. The standard press release mentioned that most of the female performers could be found in church on Sunday, and whenever possible services were held on the circus grounds.

The articles also promised an atmosphere "charged with health and happiness, vigor and virtue," and claimed that "drunkenness is never permitted in any form." According to circus management gambling was also strictly prohibited and anyone using profanity on the showgrounds would be fined.[42]

Despite the promises of press agents, the Gollmar Bros. Circus of 1922 was a hotbed of illicit activity. When questioned 50 years later, Theo Forestall, who worked in the ticket wagon that season, revealed that there was "a full line


GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

AMERICA'S GREATEST SHOWS

DAN ODOM—Manager
W. J. LESTER—Local Contractor
EMERY D. PROFFITT—Advertising Car Manager
CLARENCE AUSKINGS—Brigade Agent.
COL. GEO. W. ROSS—Chief Detective

FRED GOLLMAR—General Agent
BILLY MILES—Legal Adjuster
C. D. CALVIT—Assistant Legal Adjuster
J. A. JONES—Auditor

JOHN THE GUILFOYLES
HARRIETT
CHIEF ANIMAL TRAINERS
WITH
GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

CHARLES BARRY
EQUESTRIAN DIRECTOR AND TRAINER
OF
WILD AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

CHARLIE MARTIN—Official Announcer
THIRD SEASON, GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

FRANCOIS JULIAN ROGERS
PRIMA DONNA OF CIRCUS LAND, with GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

HAYDEN LaLONDE TROUPE
PREMIER TIGHT WIRE and REVOLVING LADDER—Season 1922—GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

TWO HOWARD GIRLS
NOVELTY WHIRLWIND LADDERS and IRON JAW ARTISTS

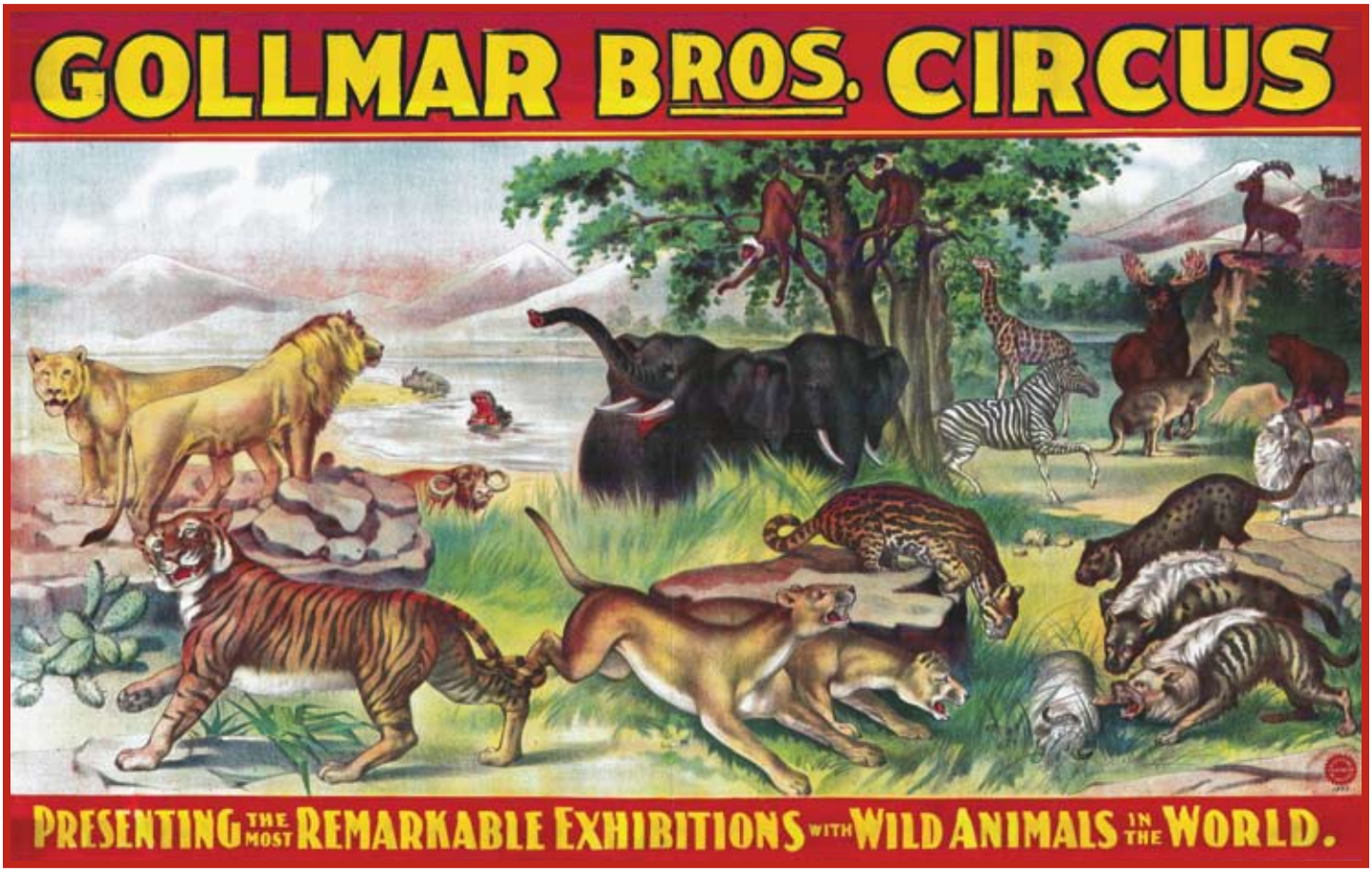
OLA DARRAGH
"ME TOO"

JAMES W. BEATTIE
MANAGER SIDE SHOWS
GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

JOE METCALFE
CHIEF ANIMAL TRAINER
THIRD SEASON—GOLLMAR BROTHERS CIRCUS

Half-way through the season the circus took out an advertisement in the trade publication Variety *which listed not only the stars of the show, but also key managers, including legal adjuster Billy Miles. One month after the ad appeared, Miles was killed on a circus lot in Arkansas.* *Variety*

Chris Berry Collection



of flat joints" [gambling devices] on the showgrounds. According to Forestall, "That was ok as far as making money went, although it was getting a bit tough to operate the joints even that far back."[43]

Forestall was not the only veteran showman who observed grift on the show. In mid-September of 1922, John Gusky[44] wrote a letter to *The Billboard* which claimed that Gollmar Bros. supported a variety of illegal activities both in the side show and the big top. "…from mitt readers to the shortcake" [shortchanging customers].

Gusky wrote that after the show had "gouged the public all day" it would turn its attention to those traveling with the circus with a large gambling operation that was organized and supported by show management. Gusky also claimed that he was beaten and "run off the lot by [general manager] Danny Odom" who had accused him of "holding out" and not paying 10% of what he had skimmed from the show.[45]

The illegal activity associated with circuses of the 1920s was referenced in a series of articles written for *Bandwagon* by Joseph Bradbury who located an undated document written on Gollmar Bros. letterhead which stated there was one roulette wheel, two slot machines and a poker table with the show. The equipment was portable and was moved between the train's privilege car and the sideshow.

The document also described a three-card monte and a shell game in the sideshow along with cooch dancers, all of which had to be "fixed" with local authorities.[46]

One of those who apparently knew quite a bit about how the grifters worked was a veteran showman of the time who identified himself only as "Kid" Harris. He explained that in each town the legal adjuster would call on the sheriff, the prosecuting attorney, and other police officials. If possible, the fixer would then bribe the officials, first with as many tickets as necessary, and frequently with cash.

Harris also explained that if someone believed they had been cheated and complained to police, the officer who had been "fixed" would escort the loser to the legal adjuster who would return the money.[47]

Sometimes, however, the local population was vocal enough to shut down an operation. On the same day that Gollmar Bros. was set up in Omaha, police in York, Pennsylvania swooped down on the Lew DuFour shows and confiscated four wheels of chance and shut down a sideshow. "The wheels were of the rankest kind," police said, adding that operators were accused of shortchanging their customers. Four women and one man were also arrested for presenting a lewd performance. The indecent remarks of the girls connected with the show while performing outside their tent brought police to the bally stage. Officials then watched the show and determined that it "was not fit for women and children to attend."[48]

Fixing the local officials was important and in Earle, Arkansas had been handled by Billy Miles along with assistant legal adjuster, C. D. Calvit. According to E. W. Adams,

Charles Ringling was a vocal opponent of grift and gambling on the circus lot. His campaign to clean up circuses and carnivals included a front page editorial in The Billboard *in the fall of 1922.* Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

who was traveling with Gollmar Bros. in 1922, the show had made all of the necessary arrangements with the local officials in Earle, Arkansas so that the games could operate, and the girls could dance in the sideshow. Adams recalled that October 23 was just like any other day, and he said there was no problem until deputy sheriff Putnam entered the tent as a crowd was gathering on the midway.[49]

According to some of those with the show, the deputy was drunk and when he started creating a disturbance, Miles was called into the tent.[50] Several of those who witnessed the commotion said the fixer quietly suggested the officer speak with his superiors, who would explain that everything was okay. Calvit was among those on hand and he claimed that his boss was able to get the officer outside of the tent, the deputy became unruly. That was when he fired one shot – point blank – at the unarmed Miles.[51]

As soon as Danny Odom heard the gunshot he called for an ambulance. It was 30 miles to Memphis, and when Miles arrived at St. Joseph's Hospital he was fighting for his life. As he was being treated, Crittenden County Sheriff William Fish and the prosecuting attorney interviewed Odom about what had happened. When doctors said the legal adjuster was not expected to survive, the Sheriff sped back to Earle and arrested deputy Putnam. Billy Miles died at 7:30 the next morning, and the officer was charged with murder.

Gollmar Bros. vowed that it would prosecute the case, claiming that Miles had been shot without cause.[52] However, circuses always have a date with tomorrow's town, and on the day that Putnam was bound over to the Crittenden County grand jury on a charge of murder, the show was 125 miles away in Humboldt, Tennessee. At deputy Putnam's preliminary hearing a week after the shooting, the officer was released on bail. When reporters questioned the lawman about the incident, he refused to comment.[53]

On the same day Ernest Putnam was released on bail, the Gollmar Bros. and Yankee Robinson Combined Circus presented a street parade that was described as "one of the best we have had for years." The performance in Union City, Tennessee was described as "interesting and varied, with some new acts and novelties, very fine and all of the best trained talent in the ring" According to an observer, "The show was one of the best that Union City has had for many years."[54]

Meanwhile, newspapers in Memphis and Arkansas began uncovering and reporting details related to the shooting. According to one story, the legal adjuster was belligerent and was only shot after he ignored Putnam's order to stop the gambling.[55] Meanwhile, circus management and the local officials continued to deny that there were any gambling or other objectionable shows while Gollmar Bros. was in Earle.[56] The circus also claimed that on the night of the shooting deputy Putnam was so drunk that he had to be ejected from the sideshow for disorderly conduct.[57]

The circus also played on the sympathy of newspaper readers and depicted Billy Miles as the sole support of his invalid father and sister who only left an estate of $300.[58] Meanwhile, local papers described deputy Putnam as "a highly efficient and faithful officer and had never been in any trouble before." (Research for this article revealed that Putnam had been involved in at least one other fatal shooting when he killed a Black man he had arrested on a charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct in 1912. He was exonerated on that charge.)[59]

Several months after the shooting, deputy Ernest Putnam was tried for murder. Because of the transient nature of the circus business, E. W. Adams was one of the few Gollmar employees who traveled to Arkansas and testified as a witness for the prosecution.[60] When the jury returned its verdict, Putnam was acquitted.[61] The officer continued to work for the Crittenden County Sheriff department until his death in 1935 at the age of 52.[62]

1922 is also considered the last year the American Circus Corporation endorsed blatant gambling on its shows. According to E. W. Adams, it was the death of Billy Miles

General Manager Danny Odom created a big presence on any circus lot. He is seen in this undated photograph with circus owner Walter L. Main. private collection of Fred Pfening III

– which he had witnessed – that pushed Jerry Mugivan to eliminate grift from his shows starting in 1923.[63]

Mugivan's decision may have also been driven by a crusade by Charles Ringling to shine the light on the gambling, grift and girl shows that were still a part of many circuses and carnivals. In a front-page editorial for *The Billboard,* he warned that, "those who are honest and clean have nothing to fear and those who are not should be exposed."

Ringling's outrage was apparent when he wrote, "Some way or another the impression has gone out that a few of the out-of-doors shows, circuses, carnivals, etc., have dropped back several decades to the days when many tented organizations added to their receipts through the operation of games of chance, the maintenance of indecent dancing acts, and by cheating in every way possible."[64]

A few weeks later, Ringling addressed the International Association of Fairs convention where he urged showmen to eliminate gambling, "hootchie cootchie dances," and private shows given for men only. The challenge to institute a moral code for circus and carnival operators was front page news from coast-to-coast.[65]

Despite Cecil B. DeMille's depiction of crooked midway games in his 1951 film *The Greatest Show on Earth,* the public was never exposed to illicit activity on the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey showgrounds. For decades, however, the circus did permit gambling among workingmen and performers. Longtime bandmaster Merle Evans recalled that, "in those days the workingmen would spread a blanket down beside the train, set a couple of lanterns on the ground and roll the dice. Craps was a popular game," he said, "and there was always a craps game going, right up until the train pulled out."[66]

The Gollmar Bros. and Yankee Robinson train pulled out of Blocton, Alabama after the performance on Saturday November 4 and made a 92-mile run to the Montgomery winter quarters. During the seven-month tour the show had covered 13,391 miles, encountered weeks of bad weather as well as crippling strikes by the railroads and coal miners, and the violent death of a key member of the circus management team.

Shortly after the show returned to Montgomery, the American Circus Corporation announced that it would field only three shows in 1923, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson and Sells-Floto. Gollmar Bros. would not return to the road, however, the equipment was in good condition and some of the wagons, cages and animals were folded into the John Robinson Circus for its 100th anniversary tour. Other property and animals from the Gollmar Bros. Circus of 1922 were sold to George Christy for his Christy Bros. Circus.

Historian and author Joseph Bradbury speculated that the decision by the American Circus Corporation to take the Gollmar show off the road may have been related to the additional expenses tied to the purchase of the winter quarters in Peru, Indiana as well as the acquisition of new steel railroad cars for Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto. Also, with one less show on the road, the Corporation's most trusted managers, including Danny Odom, could take over day-to-day operational chores, giving Mugivan and Bowers freedom to focus on the overall enterprise rather than personally managing individual circuses.[67]

And finally, although the Gollmar Bros. Circus had been well-equipped and well-advertised, not long after John Ringling purchased the American Circus Corporation, attorney John M. Kelly told a reporter that the 1922 tour had not been profitable for the Gollmar show and the circus had "a losing, disappointing season."[68]

Although Gollmar Bros. did not tour in 1923, the title still had tremendous value, plus the American Circus Corporation still owed the Gollmar family payments on its five-year lease. To recoup some of its investment, the Corporation sub-leased the Gollmar name to Chester Monahan for a five-car circus in 1924 and 1925.[69] Unfortunately, the small show was even more corrupt than the circus that had toured in 1922. Monahan had once worked for Jerry Mugivan as "a connection man," and the circus he took out in 1924 and 1925 soon had a reputation as a "red hot grift outfit."[70]

Danny Odom left the circus business shortly after John Ringling bought the American Circus Corporation in the fall of 1929. He then turned his attention to designing early pinball games, such as Ballyhoo, that paid winners in cash. Among Odom's creations for the Bally Company was a pinball machine called "Three Ring Circus."

Rich Penn Auctions

Postscript

Although gambling, grift and girl shows continued on some circuses for the next several decades, after 1922 the practice disappeared among most major shows, including those owned by the American Circus Corporation which John Ringling purchased at the end of the 1929 season. The $1.7 million deal made Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard rich, however Jerry Mugivan died only a few months after the sale closed following routine hernia surgery. Over the next several years, Edward Ballard became known as a "gambling king." After he left the circus business, he operated casinos in Miami as well as French Lick and West Baden, Indiana. In 1936, Ed Ballard was murdered in Hot Springs, Arkansas over a gambling debt. Bert Bowers died that same year of pneumonia.[71]

Danny Odom, who had managed the Gollmar Circus in 1922, left the business not long after John Ringling purchased the American Circus Corporation. During The Great Depression, Odom began designing early pinball games that paid off winners in cash. One of the games he created for Bally in 1933 was called "Three Ring Circus."[72] Danny Odom died in 1944.

Shortly before his death at the age of 98, Fred Gollmar told an interviewer there was no gambling on the lot when he and his brothers operated their circus from 1891 to 1916. The Gollmar family leased the respected title to the American Circus Corporation in 1922, and the show that season was allegedly rife with gambling, grift and girl shows.

Ralph D. and Joan M. Pierce Collection

Fred C. Gollmar, one of the five brothers who started the original Gollmar circus in 1891, left the business when the show closed in 1922. He returned to Baraboo at the end of the season where he became active in civic affairs and served as an alderman. Born in 1867, Fred Gollmar outlived each of his brothers, as well as his Ringling cousins and the three owners of the American Circus Corporation. He died on August 12, 1965. He was 98 years old. Bw

Suggested Resources and Acknowledgements

For further information the reader is directed to Joseph T. Bradbury's *Bandwagon* articles on the Gollmar Bros. Circus (Jan-Feb. 1965, May-June 1968). An audio interview of Fred C. Gollmar recorded in February 1962 is preserved at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It can be heard at https://ohms.wisconsinhistory.org/oral-history/render.php?cachefile=WSA0103.xml

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John Pugh
A Lifetime with the Circus
Part V

by Lane Talburt

With considerable reluctance, John Pugh left the English bedside of his terminally ill father in early 1969 to take part in an American wedding ceremony.

On the surface, it made perfect sense that Pugh as the general manager of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus should be best man during the exchange of vows in Sarasota between his immediate subordinate, Edward N. "Ned" Toth, and trouper Jutta Forst. The underlying reality was complicated, at the very least.

Not only was Toth's uncle – managing partner Frank McClosky – John's boss, Ned also had connected Pugh with the future Mrs. Brigitte Pugh, who just happened to be the twin sister of the new bride. Completing the complex scenario was a widening rift between John and his assistant manager/brother-in-law, whom Pugh considered ill-suited for assigned responsibilities.

As if those interpersonal trials and tribulations were insufficient, Pugh guided the three-ring tented circus through a series of rain-saturated lots and cancelled stands, as well as injuries and deaths of circus workers and animals. To cap off the season, at McClosky's insistence, John fired his best fishing and hunting buddy, the highly regarded elephant trainer Rex Williams.

An impressive view of the Beatty-Cole elephant herd doing the long mount on tubs, c.1969.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

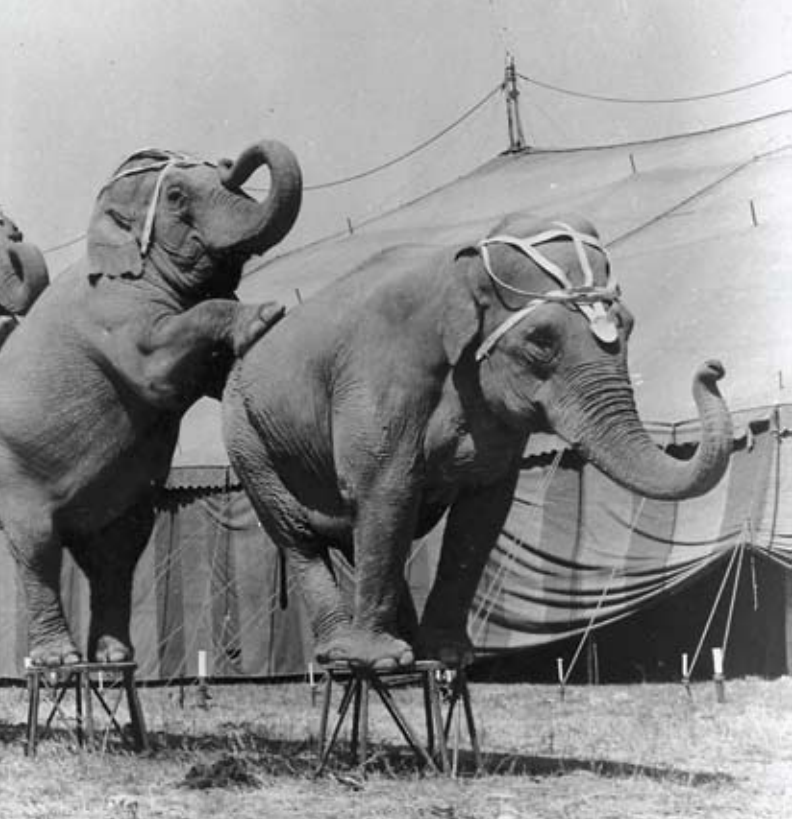
Understandably, these emotionally and physically demanding events left Pugh vulnerable to an offer from Irvin Feld to take on a management role with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. That Feld's lure of a top position failed to reel in Pugh's organizational talents bode well for Beatty-Cole.

In addition to shepherding the show in 1975 on its longest tour of almost 20,000 miles, Pugh also basked in the personal rewards of marrying beautifully blond Brigitte and having a Circus Fans Association of America "tent" raised in his honor.

None of these jumbled events were in the curriculum vitae – unwritten, of course – for the chief road manager of a circus that played mostly one-day stands over a 32-week schedule.

Middleton, Rhode Island; July 1, 1972.

James Cole photograph



Death of Digger Pugh

When Pugh took a flight out of London well ahead of the 1969 season, he knew that cancer would soon claim the life of his 68-year-old father, John Wallace Lewellen "Digger" Pugh, who died on February 1 at his Hounslow estate in suburban London.

> "I was home at Christmas [1968]. I had to come back early in 1969 because my wife's sister, Jutta, was marrying Ned. Before I left, I called the doctor and said, 'What do you think? How's my dad doing?' He said, 'John, I told you your dad was going to last three months and it's been two years now.'
>
> "I had my dad's chauffeur drive me to the airport. Just before I got on the plane, I called my stepmother, and I said, 'How's my dad?' She said, 'He's taking it very hard but, John, it's going to be the same if you left today, or whether you leave a month from now.'
>
> "I said OK and got on the plane [to New York] on Friday. I got in on Saturday. I had to drive to Sarasota for the wedding. I was the best man. I drove to DeLand on Sunday. Of course, until 2004 there was only one office phone at winter quarters, and nobody answered it. On Monday, they called and said my dad had died. I flew back on Tuesday for the funeral."[1]

With Pugh entering his eighth tour on the show and his fifth season as the operational leader, the circus once again got a head start against its chief rival in the lucrative New York market with a 14-day indoor stand at Commack from March 29 to April 12.

Just a few miles west across the East River in Manhattan, Ringling's all new Red Unit opened at Madison Square Garden for an April 1-May 11 run, with German wild animal trainer Gunther Gebel-Williams and the King Charles unicycle troupe – the show's first large African-American act – making their debut.

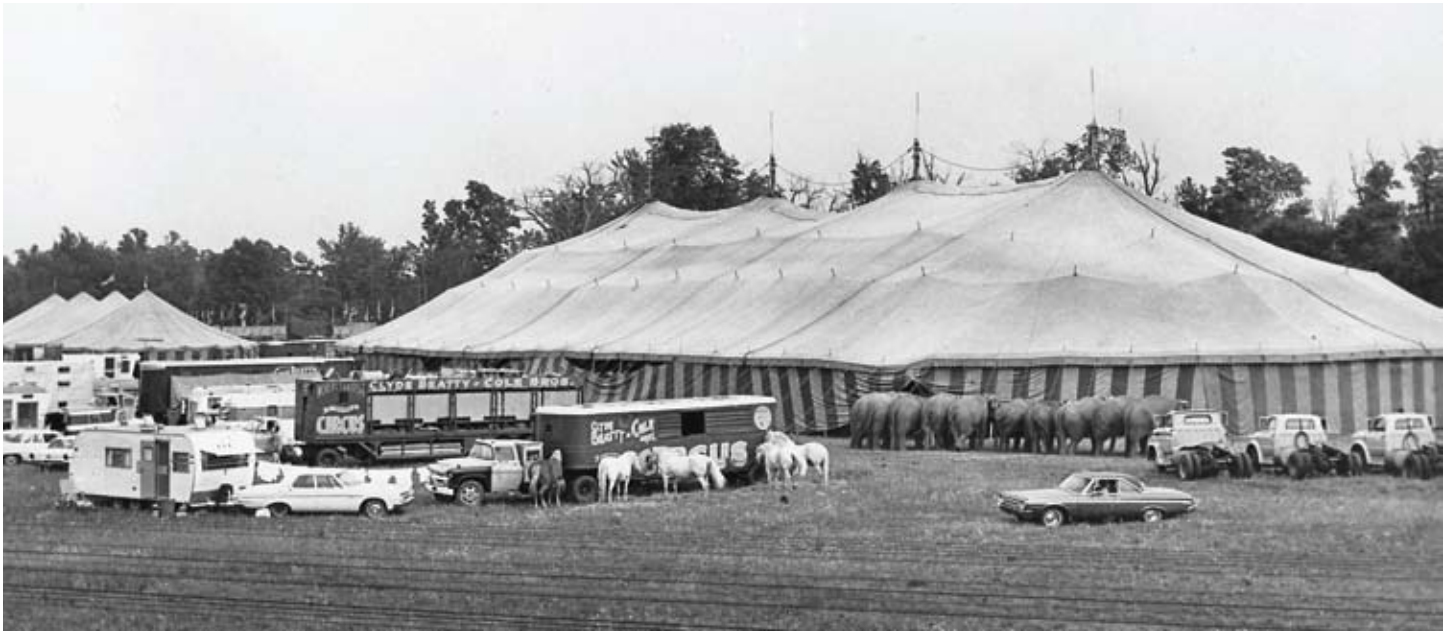
Responding to a query as to why Beatty-Cole played the Long Island Arena as its sole building stand of the tour, Frank McClosky replied, "We make money…that's what counts."[2]

Several years later, a veteran New York scribe who annually reviewed both shows drew sharp contrasts of style and substance between the two rivals:

> "Where Ringling Bros. …is big, gaudy and slick, with plenty of pageantry and Hollywood-style gloss, the [Beatty-Cole] show imparts a hearty grass-roots feeling. The smells are stronger, the tanbark is evident and the sawdust literally blows up in the audience's faces when the elephants march. The side show has all the thrills of a Midwest honky-tonk carnival where you know it's all tongue-in-cheek and hand-in-purse...Seeing the [Beatty-Cole] production is to take in not only what's being offered in the three rings, but the on-going mystique of circus life, which is far more evident in that show than the [Ringling] extravaganza."[3]

Beatty-Cole converted to its 1969 under-canvas route at Cherry Hill, New Jersey, on April 14. There was no glamour in the swishy, rutted lots which challenged the circus within a two-week period in May. Although Pugh had faced the

John's father Digger Pugh was in poor health when this snapshot was taken at his Hounslow estate near London. He died February 1, 1969. John Pugh Collection



The canvas big top, side show tent, riding act horses and elephants are all visible in this 1969 Beatty-Cole lot scene.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

sweaty task on past dates and would again, it did not make it any easier for him and his workforce. A May 15 stand in a suburb of Binghamton, New York was the first of two to be chronicled:

> "'Sometimes I think it's a miracle that we stay in business,' said John W. Pugh, general manager of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. 'But miracles are short today.'
>
> "Mr. Pugh made the remark this morning in Kirkwood as he watched teams of elephants pull trucks and trailers through deep mud that had bogged down the vehicles. It was questionable, Mr. Pugh said, whether the circus would be ready for the first show, which was scheduled for 4 o'clock this afternoon.
>
> "(About 1:30 this afternoon, the circus announced that it was forced to cancel the 4 o'clock show this afternoon because of the difficulty in getting set up. The show at 8 o'clock tonight will be held, a spokesman said.)
>
> "The weather, however, has seldom been a problem for the circus, Mr. Pugh said, as he discussed the effects that inflation and a slow economy has had on the circus. 'Certainly, the cost of everything has gone up,' Mr. Pugh said, 'but so far, the crowds that we've been getting have been very good. Of course, you never know when that will change. With all the talk about the economy, we didn't know what to expect this year.'"[4]

Arriving at a new lot in northeast Philadelphia on May 21 for a multi-day Shrine stand, circus hands were greeted again by their old but all-too-familiar nemesis. A *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter witnessed the ensuing struggle.

> "Faced with an unnavigable muddy field and a 4 p.m. matinee, the circus hitched up its 11 performing elephants in teams of twos and threes to wrestle the show in place.
>
> "The stoic beasts helped trucks through deepening ruts, hauled trailers across the ooze and brought the Big Top triumphantly out of the mud…
>
> "After two days of rain, the field was too soft for circus vehicles. A circus spokesman said, 'A team of elephants in mud will pull as much as a medium-sized Caterpillar.'"[5]

In the off hours of the Philadelphia run, the circus put out the welcome mat for the star of a series of television documentaries. George Plimpton not only experienced the excitement of being a clown and very briefly a wild-animal trainer, but also an unsuccessful attempt as an aerialist on May 24 during the last performance of the Shrine engagement. Plimpton's single shot at fame under the big top was duly documented on film.

> "During the 15 hours of practice, Plimpton, 43, [had] suffered internal hemorrhages in both shoulders…He swung out to the center of the ring where he was caught by a member of the Flying Apollos [Phil Schacht]. He swung back and reached for his own bar again, but fell. 'Everything before I reached for the bar was going great,' he said later. 'I couldn't reach far enough because of my bad shoulders.'"[6]

No amount of money, persuasion or legal petitioning could budge a determined brigade of fire fighters who opposed Beatty-Cole's contracted June 21 and 22 stand at a shopping center near Bridgeport, Connecticut. In early April, the circus and the sponsoring Knights of Columbus had secured the approval not only of the Trumbull planning

and zoning commission, but also police and engineering departments, to set up on an unpaved lot adjacent to the Trumbull Park center. Almost immediately, the local volunteer fire district intervened, repudiating the agreement. The fire chief and district commissioners insisted that, in order to ensure public safety, the circus needed four pumper fire trucks, 14 firefighters and four hoses on site both days. The Long Hill fire company claimed it did not have the necessary resources to meet those standards and that area fire departments were unable to assist.

The show's parent Acme Circus Operating Company filed suit against the Long Hill fire department, but out-of-court negotiations dragged on endlessly. At a last-minute hearing, lawyers for Beatty-Cole and the Knights of Columbus told a mediator that "approximately 1,000 tickets for the show had been distributed…advance sales were $14,000, and the daily operation cost of the circus is $10,000."

Finally, on the afternoon before the show date, the issue became moot, and the circus and sponsor withdrew their petition seeking an injunction.[7] Apparently, the change in plans didn't reach Beatty-Cole troupers, who had staged two performances at West Springfield, Massachusetts, and were already headed for Trumbull. When the circus fleet arrived on the Trumbull lot that night, "workers were told the show had been canceled…Police said the workers called headquarters to verify the cancellation after Trumbull Shopping Park and town police refused to let them continue with set-up operations."[8]

Pugh called his pal, circus buff Ralph Emerson, and Emerson invited the circus to lay over at his Wild Animal Farm in Newington. While circus workers enjoyed an unscheduled break at the farm, the circus had lost a costly day out of its 1969 tour schedule. Fortunately, a new lot was booked in downtown Milford, and a last-minute newspaper ad and article on June 21 announced that "all tickets sold in the Bridgeport area will be honored at the Milford shows on Saturday, June 21."

The last paragraph of that story revealed the fire district's underlying pretext for contesting the circus's booking at the Trumbull site. "The Long Hill Fire Department of Trumbull is conducting its annual carnival this weekend."[9]

Lillian Forst (at left) and daughter Brigette posed for photographer David Orr in Norfolk, Virginia on April 20, 1969. John Pugh and Brigette would exchange vows in December 1970. John Pugh Collection

Elephants, workers escape truck blaze

In early August, a truck driver's quick reaction to a sudden fire saved three elephants, their handler and five side show crewmen during an overnight 125-mile jump between Dayton, Ohio and Indianapolis. The driver told sheriff's deputies that "a wall of flame blew up around the cab" on the interstate highway. The chief of four responding fire-fighting units attributed the mishap to the explosion of a saddle gasoline tank that had been refilled in Dayton. According to a local media article:

> "The driver of the tractor-trailer rig, Allen Carter, 30, of Tampa, Florida, said he got the truck stopped and managed to free five men who were sleeping in the front of the trailer carrying the three pachyderms. One of the men, Jerry Morgan, said he leaped out of the burning truck and left all his possessions, even his shoes. He sustained a right foot injury in the jump. 'We opened the back door and the elephants just backed off,' Morgan said. 'They were a little shook up just as we were… The sirens on the fire trucks scared the elephants more than the fire did,' Morgan said as the three huge charges contentedly munched grass on the side of the road…[10]

Pugh recalled that the show had to buy a new truck and trailer, as the burned rig was a total loss.[11]

A *Wall Street Journal* writer was embedded on the circus for nine days, from August 18 in Grand Rapids, Michigan to August 30-31 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, giving him unfettered access to the Beatty-Cole backyard.

> "For performers, who include husband and wife teams and a score of children, the circus is both a business – they sign one-year contracts – and a way of life. 'We're gypsies,' says [aerialist] Camile O'Brien. 'Always on the go…It's full of adventure, but it's a grind. Some days everything goes wrong… Just once I'd like to sit down and have a formal dinner."

"[Slack wire juggler] Terry O'Brien and his wife (both college graduates) gross about

The "Silver Sleeper" semi-trailer was ever-present on the Beatty-Cole lot. The housing unit originated with the Ringling-Barnum overland fleet assembled following the closing of canvas operations in 1956. James Cole photograph

> $10,000 between them. During off-season, which they spend in Florida, they 'ride the rocking chair' and collect unemployment insurance."
>
> "For performers, the trailers, with running water and toilet facilities, have replaced the traditional seamy quarters of circus folk with relative luxury. The trailers range in value from $5,000 to $25,000.
>
> "However, 16 bachelors in the troupe live in a cramped airless van called 'the silver sleeper.' It's sleeping compartments are six and one-half feet long by three and one-half feet wide—'about like a casket,' dryly observes Jimmy James, a 29-year-old clown…"[12]

The "silver sleeper" was a large truck trailer retrofitted by Charlie Smith, who helped develop the Ringling highway fleet after RBB&B switched from rail to truck transportation following the 1956 end of tented operations. The trailer had been reconfigured to accommodate three-high bunks when acquired by Beatty-Cole prior to Pugh's first season in 1962. The front end of the sleeper housed female performers, while the back end was given over to males; both compartments had separate bathrooms.

Pugh candidly gave the *Journal* scribe a mixed review of his show's operational performance along the 1969 route:

> " 'We've had a bad year in terms of accidents and breakdowns,' he says, 'but we'll get this show to tomorrow's town even if we have to carry it there.' Among the mishaps: The elephant truck caught fire in one town, and another truck sheared off its top on an underpass."[13]

Another journalist, observing the show's setup at Paducah, Kentucky on September 22, chatted briefly with a nearby worker:

> " 'Salvation Bill' raised the American flag. He raises the flag nine months of the year for the circus and three months for the Salvation Army in Jacksonville, Florida. The circus picks up crews of men in almost every town, some of the old hands said…Some stay forever, like Bruce Stern, who has been with the circus for 25 years."[14]

"Kids are coming back more"

Pugh used a mid-October newspaper interview in Cocoa, Florida to correct a common misconception of the circus.

> "There are more circuses on the road this year, which is more competition for us, than any other of the last two or three years. We have additional units which belong to us [King Bros. and Sells & Gray]. As far as the circus dying, I definitely think not.
>
> "I think you're getting a better attendance. People enjoy seeing the circus now. They were getting a little tired of maybe watching the box [television]. And it's live entertainment. It's something different to do and especially in your smaller towns where you don't have any live entertainment…Kids are coming back more to circuses…Our particular show came back very strong two years ago."[15]

A late-season tent raising gone awry and a runaway baby elephant at one South Florida stand illustrated the demands that came with his GM title. In 2021, Pugh recalled the difficulties of putting up the big top across from the Hialeah race track on November 3.

> "A sandy lot was there, and we struggled for an hour to get the first pole up. I mean, you could pull the wooden stakes out by hand. I got everybody, including all of the performers, to hold the bottom of the pole while we got it up. What I did, we finally drove the stakes again, and drove them back and forward of the poles. Then I got ropes down both sides of the poles on the bale ring, and we held the poles with our bodies.
>
> "We got the elephants, and once we got first pole up, of course, we pulled the other ones from [that] center pole. And I got trucks [to anchor] the guy lines. We played there two days, and it took a

This August 1970 photo taken on the Beatty-Cole midway in Ann Arbor, Michigan reveals youngsters enjoying profit-making concession items – cotton candy and snow cones. Ann Arbor News

Caterpillar and the elephants to get our trucks and performers' trailers off the sandy lot."

Pugh unloaded his frustrations in a phone call to McClosky:

> "Frank said, 'I understand you got the trucks around and put the tent up.' I finally said, 'Thank God we had good weather. You're lucky we didn't get any wind there, because we would have lost the tent.' "[16]

Another incident on the same site turned nasty. It began when Pugh returned from a Miami animal park with a newly purchased baby elephant and parked the truck in the circus backyard. Left in Rex Williams' care, the newcomer got out of the truck and wandered off the lot, crossing a busy highway. As Pugh recalled during 2021 and 2022 phone interviews:

> "Rex...wasn't watching. Police came and said, 'There's a small elephant on Route 1 [across from the circus lot].' That was before the interstate was built down there. And I had to go back and lead him in. I got into an argument with Rex about the baby elephant. And Rex almost got into a fight with me…finally he said, 'You can work the elephants for me.' "[17]

Pugh said the elephant trainer, "went away for three days."[18] He returned to the ring and presented the Beatty-Cole elephants for the remainder of the season. Even though Williams refused to engage Pugh in conversation from that point forward, the General Manager believed he had smoothed things over following the confrontation. He was wrong. "McClosky must have heard about it. In winter quarters after the show closed, he told me to let Rex go. That was one of the toughest things I ever had to do.[19] "Rex was a good guy, and I was close to him and his wife [Ava]. Their trailer was next to mine" in the circus backyard.[20]

In 1970, Williams took over the Hoxie Bros. elephant herd, and a year later he joined Circus Vargas where he commanded a male elephant, Colonel Joe, for many years. The veteran trainer also remained in demand for off-season Shrine dates.

In the meantime, Pugh named the baby elephant "Jacquie," after Frank and Brenda McClosky's young daughter. Unfortunately, Jacquie died in winter quarters of an unknown illness.

Ringling casts net for Pugh

Increasing dissatisfaction with Ned Toth's job performance left Pugh vulnerable when the lure of a high-level position at Ringling Bros. came his way in the 1969 season's closing days. Once again, Ringling's top talent executive Bob Dover, who had introduced John to Brigitte two years before, was the catalyst. "Bob got in touch and asked me to go to the Doral Country Club hotel to meet with [Irvin Feld and his son, Kenneth]. They offered me a really good deal. I would be the manager of both units [Red and Blue], with an assistant manager on both shows." Lloyd Morgan and Tuffy Genders ran the respective units.[21]

> "I said, 'You've already got the best two men that you could have.' And [Irvin Feld] said, 'I want a younger guy who has some ideas for the show.'[22] They also offered to give me a half train car. In fact, Bob Dover took me to the winter quarters and showed me the car and said, 'You'll have this and you can decorate it any way you want.'
>
> "Mr. McCloskey came to visit the show down in Fort Lauderdale, and I gave him my notice. 'Look,' I said, the show closes in two weeks and I'd like to leave.' And he said, 'Oh, it's my…nephew. He's running you off.' He fired Ned, of course, and now I was in trouble with my in-laws. Ned swore that I got Frank to fire him. I said I was ready to leave – and I was ready to leave!"[23]
>
> "Frank said, 'What do you guys [Pugh and

A proud moment for John Pugh on Daytona Beach with the Rolls Royce he inherited from his father. John Pugh Collection

> Toth] have going for you?' I said, 'Mr. McClosky, you gave us a hundred dollars out of the sideshow, and I split that fifty-fifty with Ned.' [Toth was the show's grounds manager.] He said, 'No, no, what else do you have going for you?' I said, 'Well, you paid me.' And I didn't realize until much later how amazed that guy was. He figured I had my fingers in every joint on the show, or had a set of tickets that I sold, or that I ran the sheriff's sale."[24]

Pugh ultimately decided to reject the Ringling bid. And Toth stayed on as John's assistant manager for the 1970 tour. But it did little to assuage Pugh's ill feelings toward his assistant manager.

> "Frank would call me, and I used to go down to his house [in Winter Park, Florida]. He asked me, 'How is Ned getting along?' I said, 'I'd like to have him carry the ball once in a while.' And he said, 'Ned wants to get credit for standing at the front door.'
>
> "Ned used to follow the fleet, so he didn't get up in the mornings. I'd get in in the early morning hours to make the set up. I didn't see him until the afternoon. Ned came in [at Philadelphia]. It was a rainy day. He was sitting in the blues, and I was driving stakes for the quarter poles. He said to me, 'For a general manager, you swing a hell of a sledgehammer.' Ned was dressed up in his rain gear – an expensive raincoat and nice shiny shoes. I was covered in mud, and he was waiting for the open up after we got finished. It was getting late, and we had elephants pulling everything up, and Ned was just sitting there."[25]
>
> Pugh's brother-in-law remained an operational thorn for the next four seasons.

Enter Freddy Logan

By the time the 1969 tour ended in Orlando on November 14, the Beatty-Cole troupers had traveled 14,346 miles, exceeding the previous tour's route of just over 11,000 miles.

Within days after Rex Williams' departure, a new elephant superintendent, Fred Logan, came on the scene. A native of Canada and former boss of Dory Miller's Kelly-Miller and Carson & Barnes herds, the 44-year-old trainer became a popular fixture on the show for the next two-plus decades.

Logan was accompanied by his wife, Ora, the daughter of a Cheyanne tribal chief, and their eight children. Ora rode an elephant in the performance and son Walter assisted his father. Three other siblings would join the family acts in later years.

Pugh said even though he was a dozen years younger than his new elephant trainer, Logan always called him "old man."

"When Freddy came to winter quarters, he set up three rings there," said Pugh. "He was a great practice guy, and he used to walk the elephants every day when the weather was dry and it was not cold. He was training them as he was exercising them. He used to go down the road and then up the hill and through the woods, then bring them through the back gate."[26]

Logan's performing style differed from his predecessor. While Rex Williams put the Beatty-Cole bulls through their paces on horseback, Logan would always be seen running energetically beside the 12 show-owned Asian elephants in the opening spec and as he presented them on both sides of the track in the walking long mount.

One of the elephants Logan inherited was Kate who had a history escaping the Beatty-Cole lot. In early 1970, she wandered away from winter quarters in DeLand and was on her own for five days – from January 5 through January 9. According to Pugh, Kate traveled at least 100 miles in central Florida before her capture, leaving "a trail of broken fences, fence posts and clotheslines."[27]

The herd's new trainer admitted to another writer that "Kate, a 22-year-old Indian elephant and longtime circus trouper, wanders off from time to time. But he said she is harmless, though very adept at pulling up fence posts to get from one piece of property to another.[28]

In separate 1970 accounts, Logan explained what led to one of Kate's escapes and subsequent adventures. "I think what made her run off was the fact that we unloaded her from a warm van into the cold air outside, and she just balked."[29] The elephant's capture was reported as somewhat uneventful. "Kate was captured at Lake Helen, 10 to 12 miles from the winter quarters...She was found to be okay outside of scratches."[30]

"Sheriff's officers spotted her in a pasture on June 9. A posse of about a half-dozen deputies in three police cars

Fred Logan took over the Beatty-Cole elephants after the 1969 season ended. Seen here presenting the center ring five in Commack, Long Island in the spring of 1970, "Freddie" Logan would stay with the show for more than two decades.

James Cole photograph

drew within 100 feet of Kate, who continued to munch moss…"[31]

> "The temperature was hovering around 24 degrees and both the elephant and the deputies were shaking from the cold…A truck was ordered from the circus and Logan took along another elephant to coax Kate into the truck… 'Her engine had just plain run down and she sure was glad to see me,' [Logan said]…
>
> "Kate was taken to a warm elephant shed where she got a good meal of cracked corn and oats, hay and a good stiff drink to wash it all down…'We gave her a good belt (two gallons) of Early Times, her favorite [bourbon], mixed in about seven gallons of water to warm her up,' said Logan… 'She was shivering when she got in the truck,' Logan said, 'but I've never seen her as content as she is now.' "[32]

Logan, while explaining Kate's escape and recovery to various news media covering the nationally publicized runaway, put in a good word for his charges: "Elephants are big, lovable creatures…and they are very intelligent. In fact, they are escape artists; some are as handy with the 'finger' at the end of their trunk as people are with the fingers on their hands."[33]

Pugh concurred with Freddie Logan's assessment, but added Big Pete to the list of elephantine offenders who were able to loosen the chains that bound their rear leg to the picket line. Kate and Pete (short for "Petunia") were often paired in harness to extract circus vehicles from muddy lots.

> "Let me tell you, Pete was very good at things, but she was hard to manage. She used to sit on cars. She would always mount on the hood of a car, like she's doing the long mount. How many cars we bought I don't know."[34]

At a one-day stand on a muddy lot in Corpus Christi, Texas, in October, Pugh emphasized the importance of elephants while watching Pete and another partner, Helen, during the setup.

"'Now is when elephants earn their keep,' said the circus manager, John Pugh, an Englishman

The General Manager of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., 1970.

Albert House photograph

whose accent has been softened by many years in the United States. 'If this field was really under mud, we'd have the elephants setting up every stick in this circus,' said Pugh, who used to be a performer 'until they found out what a lousy acrobat I was and made me a manager.' "[35]

A continuous headache for the general manager was the expense of keeping the show on the road. " 'When I came to Beatty [in 1962] our daily costs were $5,000; now we spend $8,500 a day,' says John Pugh…'Our costs are skyrocketing unbelievably. That's why we have to raise our prices. We just couldn't cut it otherwise.' "[36]

Pugh's attention, both under the big top and in the backyard, increasingly turned to his equally industrious and multi-talented girlfriend, Brigitte with whom he shared the same birthday – June 18 – but on different years. During the show's 1970 opening stand in Commack arena, a Long Island reporter was also captivated by the daughter of magician Ferry Forst:

"Brigitte Forst is a circus girl with blonde hair, blue eyes, skin as soft and pink as cotton candy, and a smile as breathtaking as a highwire act. All in all, she is a lovely sight to see, which is a good thing since she seems to be everywhere you look these days at the Long Island Arena.

"Visitors…may be greeted at the door by Brigitte, looking very much like a Lufthansa stewardess in her usherette's crimson minidress. Minutes later, they see Brigitte in pink sequined tights pop out of a doll house (most appropriate), clammer into a cannon and then – POW! WHOOSH! – 'reappear' seconds later dangling high above the center ring, grinning and waving like a cheerful maid-in-the-moon.

"Look again, a few minutes later, and there's our Brigitte, strutting across the sawdust – this time in gold sequins and a towering bird of paradise headdress – to scamper nimbly up a rope and perform a series of contortions on a ladder 30 feet above our heads…

"And what does she do between performances? 'Well,' she said, 'in the mornings I work as a secretary in the office'…Brigitte lives in a house trailer with her parents (her mother is also a part of the act) when the circus is on the road and in a house in Sarasota, Fla., when it is not."[37]

John and Brigitte tie marital knot

Pugh said McClosky informed him that the Forst troupe would not be on the 1971 tour, believing that audiences had become too familiar with the illusions. But there was another factor: Johnny and Brigitte were about to be married. "Ferry Forst lost the twins, and that was his dukey."[38] John proposed to Brigitte almost immediately after McClosky's revelation.

Addressing an audience of circus fans in 2008, Pugh joked that – with several twists to towners' tradition – circus women threw a bridal shower for Brigitte under the big top, naturally, on November 21, a day before the last performances of the tour in Orlando.

"The party was given by Mrs. Edna Antes, secretary-treasurer of the circus corporation, and was attended by 50 female members of the circus and the owners' wives… clowns and elephants got into the act by producing a humorous skit."[39]

John and Brigitte exchanged vows in Sarasota on December 12, 1970.

Years later, Pugh chuckled to an audience of circus fans that "my father told me two things in life: 'don't ever own a circus, and don't ever own any animals.' He also said 'don't ever buy a book that you can enjoy at the library,' meaning don't get married and knuckle down. But I've done all three of them."[40]

A Sarasota newspaper columnist covered the ceremony and the British-flavored getaway:

"The wedding reception was a gracious one, held at the Plaza. The bridegroom, a native of England, by way of a switch, drank coffee as he ate of the decorative cake (topped with two white birds), whereas his bride, born in a country noted for its strong coffee, drank tea.

"As for tin cans and a Rolls Royce…that really gorgeous car had been 'decorated' with a large-lettered announcement proclaiming to the world that the couple inside were Just Marrieds.

The 1972 date in Indianapolis was advertised with this poster featuring Roland Butler artwork for "Big Otto."

Chris Berry Collection

"The late Digger Pugh, father of the bridegroom, left the specially built car to his son at the time of his death a year ago.

"In January the young couple plan to continue their wedding trip, in England. They currently are at the West Palm Beach apartment of the Frank McCloskys."[41]

Several years later the couple bought their first home in DeLand. Ned and Jutta Toth lived nearby.

Brigitte continued to travel with John and to perform in the swinging ladder routine under the Beatty-Cole big top for a number of seasons. "She had heart trouble, and that's when she decided to stay at home," he said. "I was on the show, and Rene Storey (then a staffer in the Winter Park office) called me up and said, 'Get down here as quickly as you can.' I got to see Brigitte for five minutes before they took her into the operating room…And now she's got a triple bypass and seven stints in."[42]

Beatty-Cole had undertaken its 1970 tour with its usual indoor stand at Commack from March 21 to April 5, then took to under-canvas performances for the remainder of the season. By the time the show closed with a two-day stand at Orlando on November 22, the show had traveled an estimated 14,791 miles. That figure increased only slightly to 15,054 in 1971.

Once again, the circus faced a shortage of workers from Day 1. A continuous spate of want ads carried a new qualifier for job-seeking laborers: "Cannot bring wife or car."

Following the Commack arena opening and early into the tented route, the show's co-owner addressed the worker shortage to the writer of a syndicated news service:

"Raspy-voiced Frank McClosky, who is associate owner of Beatty-Cole, says the annual turnover rate is 'at least 60-65 percent.' One reason being low pay (roustabouts earn as little as $25 a week plus board and bunk). Another reason is small chance for advancement. ('What am I going to be,' asks one hired muscle, "the general manager some day?') And the biggest reason is probably that the ever-moving circus requires too much investment of human strain."[43]

Substantial numbers of new hires were destined to be short-term fill-ins, as another reporter explained through several interviews on the show's Hagerstown, Maryland lot. One of these noted:

"For Jim Parker, it isn't turning out to be even a pleasant interlude. The 20-year-old trombone player was released from the Army last week to take 'seasonal employment' in the circus band. He intends to enroll in the New York State College of Forestry next fall, if he can stand the circus that long.

" 'I thought it would be a little better than this as far as living conditions,' he mourned, pointing to his bunk, which would give a submariner claustrophobia…Parker's bunk and nine others are crammed into one half of a tractor trailer. The other half is storage area for circus equipment…There is a small sink fed by a water tank and a urinal, but no toilet and shower. 'It's almost like camping,' Parker said, 'but I get used to it.'..."[44]

Employees only in 'blue room'

While workers were expected to be on good behavior in public, their conduct in the backyard was another matter. "We were a very clean show," the retired circus owner recalled in a 2022 interview. "We didn't have any games of chance on the midway. Once in a while somebody would come up in a car and try to sell jewelry."[45]

Gambling may not have been present on the Beatty-

Dave Hoover's fighting-style wild animal act created considerable excitement on the John Pugh managed circus. Hoover is seen here in the steel-bound arena on August 26, 1975.

Ann Arbor News

Cole midway, but circus employees had their own backyard retreat, a small 10 x 10-foot tent, instantly recognizable by its all-blue canvas, as Pugh recalled during a 2014 interview:

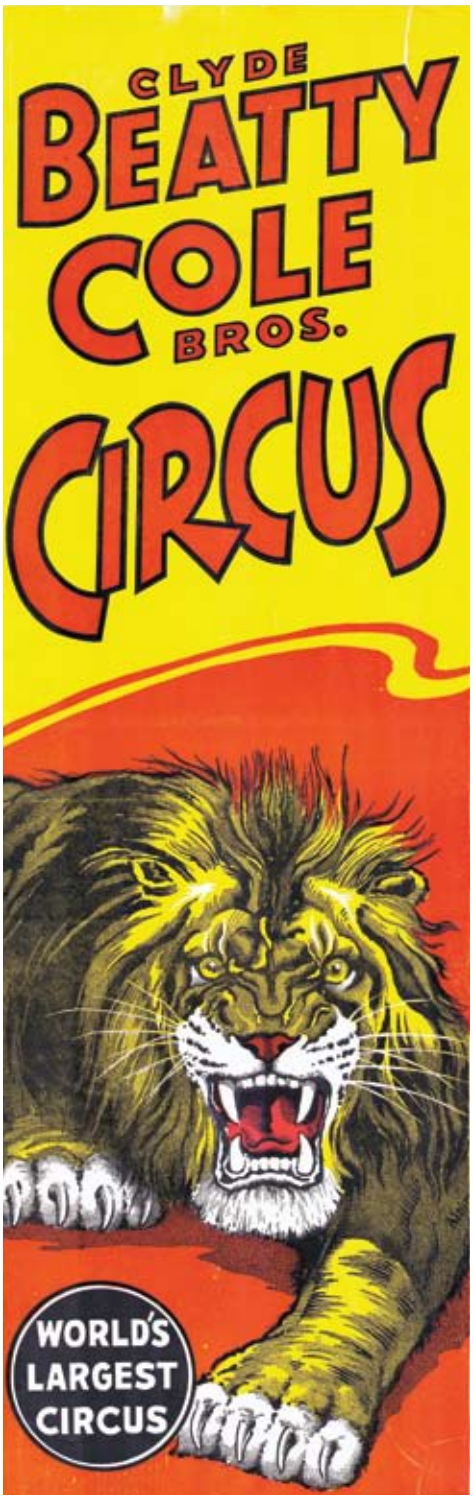
> "When I first came on the show, they had the blue room still. And a guy called Banjo ran the gambling in there…We also sold beer to employees in the blue room. Finally, somebody put the finger on me, and a federal agent came up to me and said, 'You know, you've got to have a license [to sell beer].' So now I've got the vig – and it was $850. Well, in those days I was getting paid $150 a week to be general manager. That was a big chunk of money. I ended up paying it, and then the agent said, 'Now you have a federal license. You can play.' I said, 'No more, no how am I going to put up with this.' And that was the end of the beer sales."

The gambling continued inside the blue tent until Pugh bought the show in 1982.[46]

Tiger claws Hoover

With less than two weeks remaining in the 1971 tour, trainer Dave Hoover was temporarily sidelined when attacked by a 600-pound tiger while performing in the steel arena, as reported by media outlets:

> "Hoover was clawed by Singapore, 'the most trustworthy tiger,' during a matinee on Sunday (November 14) at Miami. As a part of his act, Singapore does six rolls. Coming out of each roll, he is sitting on his haunches, ready to spring. This time instead of taking another roll, he leaped and clawed Hoover on his right arm and left leg.[47]
>
> "John Pugh, general manager of the circus who was standing near the cage when it happened, said, 'Hoover stepped back, but his foot caught something on the floor and the big cat clawed him on the arm,' Pugh related. 'Though bleeding heavily, Hoover fought the tiger away with a chair and continued the performance…
>
> "Pugh said he believed Hoover probably was released after treatment at a Miami hospital and then went to his home in Hialeah…He said Hoover wanted to continue the performance in Naples (on May 15) but the extent of the injuries made it obvious he could not."[48]



Chris Berry Collection

Pugh said he maintained a tenuous relationship with Dave Hoover for much of his performing career on Beatty-Cole. "I was always nice to him," Pugh related in a 2022 interview. "But he was always knocking me to Frank [McClosky]. He was telling him that John Pugh doesn't know anything about running a circus.'"

Beatty-Cole troupers completed the 1971 season with a three-day stand at Orlando, November 26-28, before heading home to winter quarters.

Boss clown calms crowd fleeing 1972 storm

Only three days into the show's 1972 under-canvas tour (following the traditional Commack indoor debut from March 25 to April 9), producing clown Kenneth Dodd pitched in to help circus fans in his hometown – Danville, Virginia – avoid injury as they evacuated the big top during an April 13 electrical storm. Local media noted Dodd's heroic efforts.

> "Ken Dodd was introduced at yesterday's (two) shows in recognition of his 43rd birthday and before the stormy evening was over, he and his co-workers were summoned to the exits to restore calm in a crowd that was on the verge of complete panic...The band played on as if nothing unusual was happening and above the music, the harsh sound of the ringmaster's whistle summoned the savior of the situation…Former Southsider Ken Dodd and his fellow clowns came running to the exits, giving calm directions and clowning a bit to put the crowd at ease…No injuries were reported…With the second performance cut short, the (troupe) pulled their equipment out of the mud and headed for High Point, North Carolina."[49]

Beatty-Cole continued to attract its share of top-notch

performers. Among them was veteran animal trainer Jack Joyce, who returned as performance director to the Clyde Beatty Circus he had joined a quarter of a century earlier. In addition to a center ring mixed act of llamas, zebras and stallions that he put together with his wife, Joyce presented a troupe of greyhounds.

As always, the circus also served as a temporary refuge for vagabonds and other short-timers. Among such, want ads attracted a group of refugees from Cuba and other Central American countries. The circus took on a number of foreign visitors who were being temporarily housed at a federal immigration facility. "We needed the help," Pugh explained.[50]

To avoid damages created by the remnants of Hurricane Agnes, the circus skipped a one-day stand in nearby Peekskill and went straight to Hempstead, Long Island, where it extended an original two-day stand to three – June 22-24. On arrival there, the show's 24-hour man found a new tractor and trailer temporarily blocking the layout and setup. Pugh recalled that a driver for Johnny Canole, the Midwestern Chevrolet dealer who had provided Beatty-Cole's original fleet in 1956, had delivered the rig to the lot on the campus of Hofstra University and simply left it in the middle of the field.[51]

Storms periodically followed the circus for the remainder of the summer, creating a series of further cancellations and tentless performances.

For a July 16 stand at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a local publication reported that "the circus was billed as the largest in the world under tent, but Sunday's performances were in the open air.

> "Circus officials said the muddy grounds were too soft to hold the stakes for the big top…The second performance was cut short by the onset of thundershowers…Elks lodge chairman of the local fundraising project said the performers were 'very sorry for the inconvenience and hoped to make it up to the public next year.' He added that this is the fifth or sixth place the circus had to perform without the Big Top because of wet conditions."[52]

Bad weather continued to dog the show's Midwestern operations throughout the September dates. On a soggy but playable lot at Battle Creek, Michigan, on September 12:

> "By 6 a.m. workmen were spreading canvas on wet grass…'That canvas has really been beat by the elements this year,' said John Kendall, a publicity man for the circus. 'The men have patched it I don't know how many times. But it's still a good top.' It rained Monday (September 11) at Kalamazoo, soaking the canvas and sticking trucks in mud. Kendall said the field in Battle Creek is the firmest the circus has sat on in weeks…'Rain and slop has hurt attendance.'"[53]

Michigan blowdown traps Pugh

The Beatty-Cole entourage barely escaped harming paying customers following the night performance at Flint, Michigan, on September 16, as reported by The Associated Press:

> "At least 15 workmen were taking down the Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers Circus tent and had all four sides removed when a heavy wind lifted the top of the 150-by-300-foot tent off its four supporting poles and sent it crashing down on them, police said…James Titus, 33, and David Ramsey, 46, both circus employees, were listed in fair condition at a hospital. An unidentified third person suffered head injuries…Witnesses said when the wind lifted the big top, guy wires attached to tractor trailers pulling the tent down became entangled and turned the trailers over. All the workmen had managed to crawl out from under the tent before police arrived. This was the second time this year and at least the third time since 1968 one of the circus tents has collapsed. In June, one workman was injured while they were erecting the tent for a performance near Albany, N.Y."[54]

Left unreported by the media coverage was the fact that Pugh had been temporarily trapped by the collapsing big top. Pugh had stayed behind to help with the teardown. He was driving one of two Chevy trucks pulling two grandstands seat trailers from the tent when sudden strong wind gusts lifted the big top from its poles and simultaneously dropped the quarter poles.

Both grandstand vehicles were overturned, with Pugh unable to open the windows of his cab. He said he feared that the gas tanks on both trucks would catch fire. "I didn't want to break the glass or cut holes in the tent to escape, but I finally managed to escape on my hands and knees," he recalled. Pugh was unharmed, but stayed behind to oversee the rescue and repair operations. The hands-on general manager was also forced to revert to his sail-maker experience, sewing rips in the collapsed canvas before it could be raised in the next town. "I sewed for three and a half hours." However, the delay necessitated the cancellation of the September 17 afternoon performance in Ann Arbor.[55]

As if rain-forced cancellations were not enough to depress earnings of the Frank McClosky-Jerry Collins enterprise, the increasing presence of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in the New York metropolitan area was equally daunting. Beatty-Cole had as usual beat Ringling into the nation's largest circus market with its Easter indoor dates at Commack, but *The Greatest Show on Earth* countered with historic nine-week, back-to-back stands by its Red and Blue units, respectively at Madison Square Garden.

And in the autumn, Ringling's Blue Unit invaded Beatty-Cole's previously unchallenged stomping grounds in Long

Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. was generally considered a "low grass" show, but did not appear so in this setup scene where unmowed grass and weeds ruled the Middleton, Rhode Island showgrounds on July 4, 1973. James Cole photograph

Island for a two-week engagement at the newly-built – and much larger – Nassau Coliseum, as *Newsday* explained:

> "The reason for the 16-year absence from Long Island, according to a circus spokesman, was that there was no outdoor arena to house the show. Just about a month after playing in a huge striped tent on New South Road in Hicksville in 1956, the circus ceased to play under canvas and turned to performing only in major indoor arenas.
>
> "[Irvin] Feld, the producer of the circus, explained that by 'coming to Long Island we recognize full well that Nassau and Suffolk are no longer the backyard of New York but an important and major market we've long wanted to appear in.' Feld added that pending final arrangements, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey will probably appear at the 16,200-seat Nassau Coliseum each season."[56]

Beatty-Cole uses 'wait' paper

With the availability of new indoor arenas increasing rapidly in smaller American cities, Beatty-Cole found itself head-to-head with Ringling Bros. for the first time in upstate New York in late spring 1973. On the heels of competing with "The Big One" during its New York City and Philadelphia engagements, Beatty-Cole managers were perplexed that Ringling was chosen to be the first event staged in Binghamton's new arena, on June 5-6. That would be two days in front of Beatty-Cole, which was to play the 5 Mile lot in suburban Kirkwood on June 8-9.

The fact that the Ringling Blue Unit was to set up in the new downtown arena after a 19-year absence from Binghamton raised the dander of Beatty-Cole advance man Donald Perkins, who reminded the local newspaper that the community had benefited from the tented circus's past appearances.

> "In seven years, the Rotary Club has brought in between $35,000 and $40,000 for its charity activities. While they get 40 per cent from the $3 adult and $2 children's advance tickets, the extra $1 paid to reserve those seats goes to Beatty…I do feel – and you can quote me – that whoever is behind this, it was very poor planning. Everybody is hurt. It is dividing the potential up to someone's disadvantage, and it's very unfortunate."[57]

To counter Ringling's initial thrust, Beatty-Cole bill posters plastered area store windows and poles with posters encouraging circus fans to "wait" for the under-canvas show.

Producer Feld arrived in Binghamton with his railroad circus, prodding another local writer to report that, with Ringling:

> "There are no sideshows and carnival attractions. It's all under one roof…There's no ties to charity…The tickets are $4, $5 and $6 a shot, and as of yesterday, 92 percent of the 4,800 seats for the four performances today and tomorrow are sold out. The arena manager says that if there's a sell-out, ticket

sales will bring in about $100,000 with 10 percent of that and 30 percent of concession sales going to the arena…The rest goes to the circus."[58]

Moving on to a one-day stand at Troy, New York on July 11, the canvas circus ran into a rare, time-wasting operational problem. After setting up on the Albany-Saratoga Speedway lot at nearby Malta, Pugh discovered that "we've got to move the whole thing. We're 50 feet on someone else's property." The miscue was attributed to the 24-hour man who had chalked out the footings for tents, trucks and trailers in the dark.

Reflecting on the 1973 schedule covering almost 15,500 miles, Pugh simply noted that "we had 83 days of rain."[59]

Back in winter quarters, Pugh was thankful to be rid of brother-in-law Ned Toth, who had been his Number 2 for the past five seasons. Toth's uncle, Frank McClosky, "fired him." This followed McClosky's visit to the circus several weeks prior to the end of the tour to inspect concessions operations. Pugh said he and treasurer Edna Antes had made the decision to place Toth in charge of the profitable segment after illness had sidelined the regular concession manager. It was a wrong move, he admitted. "Ned thought I had squealed on him, but I didn't," Pugh insisted.[60]

Injuries, sale rumors highlight 1974 tour

In 1974 Bob Grey was hired as the Pugh's new manager; he lasted one season. He was replaced in 1975 by Art Branning, who served in that position for a number of tours. He also helped out with winter quarters operations.

Seen here in 1974 under the Beatty-Cole big top, John Herriott was a highly respected equestrian, animal trainer, ringmaster and performer.

J. Kurt Spence photograph

Young equestrienne Nellie Hanneford graced the sawdust ring in 1975 as her mother Catherine "Kay" Francis Hanneford and Gary Thomas looked on.

Ann Arbor News

The 1974 tour was fraught with rumors of a possible sale of the show and the injury of Freddie Logan. Following multi-day stands in Commack and Philadelphia, the circus continued on a course of mostly one-day stands that would take the troupers on a nine-month, 15,500-mile journey that began on April 6 and ended on December 15 in Orlando.

The show's elephant trainer was sent to the hospital when "a [lighting] chandelier fell on Fred Logan and fractured his skull."[61] During the trainer's recovery, other elephant assistants filled in for Logan.

En route to Lincoln, Illinois for two performances on October 3, a semi-trailer carrying three elephants overturned on an interstate highway about 4 a.m. and claimed the life of a 35-year-old elephant. As reported in *The Decatur Daily Review:*

> "Deanna was injured in the accident when another elephant fell on top of her...Two of the elephants were removed so that the truck could be righted. It took a wrecker to get the injured elephant back in the truck, according to Gary Thomas, assistant elephant trainer.
>
> "When the truck arrived in Lincoln, Deanna nearly fell out. She died about five minutes later, Thomas said.
>
> "The two other elephants, Pete and Sue, were only injured slightly. They were back in the ring for the 4 p.m. performance of the circus…
>
> "Randy Williams, one of the circus workers, said, 'Most of the time when I see the elephant show in the circus,

it thrills me to watch them. But when I watched the show this afternoon, it didn't do anything for me. The circus is a big family and when (Deanna) died – well, it would have been no worse if my father had died.' "[62]

Partners put Beatty-Cole up for sale

The big story of the season may have been Jerry Collins' pre-season revelation that he was looking for a buyer for the giant outfit. In addition to announcing the sale of one of his race tracks in Oregon and his intent to dispose of several others:

> "Collins, 66, said he and his partner Frank McClosky will sell Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus – which they own jointly…
>
> "Collins said the circus, which operates 200 days a year at about 160 stops, will go on the block for $10 million.
>
> "With the consummation of the sales, Collins said he and his son, Jack Collins, will concentrate on the operation of the Sanford-Orlando Kennel Club and Sarasota Kennel Club – limiting their activities to Florida properties."[63]

Of course, hay for the elephants and other animals had to be delivered to the lot in each new stand. J. Kurt Spence photograph

Even though the owners were unable to attract potential buyers, the publicity may have been a factor in circus managers plans to increase the 1975 tour to a record-setting 19,400 miles, a figure not reached since Collins and McClosky rebranded the former Clyde Beatty Circus as a truck show in 1957.

Demanding 1975 tour

When Beatty-Cole troupers pulled into Commack in 1975 to set up for a shorter, week-long engagement from March 25-31, there was a realization that a colorful era of performances at the 4,000-seat Long Island Arena was coming to an end. The building's owner, Suffolk County, was turning the facility over to a private investor. In future years the structure would be used as a flea market and eventually razed and replaced with a shopping mall.

After successfully performing its first two shows under canvas on April 2 at Oxon Hill, Maryland, the circus was forced to forego single-day stands at Winchester and Harrisonburg, Virginia, and a matinee at Charlottesville due to cold weather. However, it weaved through other communities in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania before arriving at Philadelphia to play its customary Memorial Day weekend Shrine engagement – May 15-26.

Circus-goers were treated to a new elephant act during the season. A trio of baby elephants – Debbie, Missie and Omi – had been trained by Logan at winter quarters and initially were exhibited in the show's menagerie. "The three learned so well," noted a Beatty-Cole publicity release, "that they have replaced the 1974 center ring elephant act which now performs in an end ring."[64]

Circus loses a teenage trouper

Perhaps the saddest moment for the entire circus family was the announced death on September 18 of 15-year-old Gary Hoover, the older of two sons of Dave and Lois Hoover, following an eight-month struggle with a brain tumor. The mourning was intensified for Mrs. Hoover, whose father, Roger Allen Barnes, 78, (retired co-owner of Beers-Barnes Circus), died of grief just hours after learning of his grandson's passing.[65]

Following in the footsteps of his famous father, young Gary had aspired to be an animal trainer. In the meantime, according to a 1974 Ohio newspaper feature, Gary "arises at six each morning for an hour of eighth-grade studies. Then he awakens circus laborers and begins his own tasks of feeding the animals in the sideshow menagerie and cleaning their cages…But the thing he enjoys most is being 'second cage man' for his father's cat act."[66]

The Hoover's other son, George, later assisted his father with the act and went on to be a concession manager on the Beatty-Cole show.

The bone-weary touring group roamed scores of cities and towns in the mid-Atlantic region, New England, the Midwest, Southwest and the deep South before coming to trail's end at DeLand, staging two performances on November 30.

Pointing out that he had nothing to do with the show's routing, Pugh advocated focusing circus resources to concentrate primarily on the nation's eastern corridor where the circus perennially did good business. BW

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To be continued.

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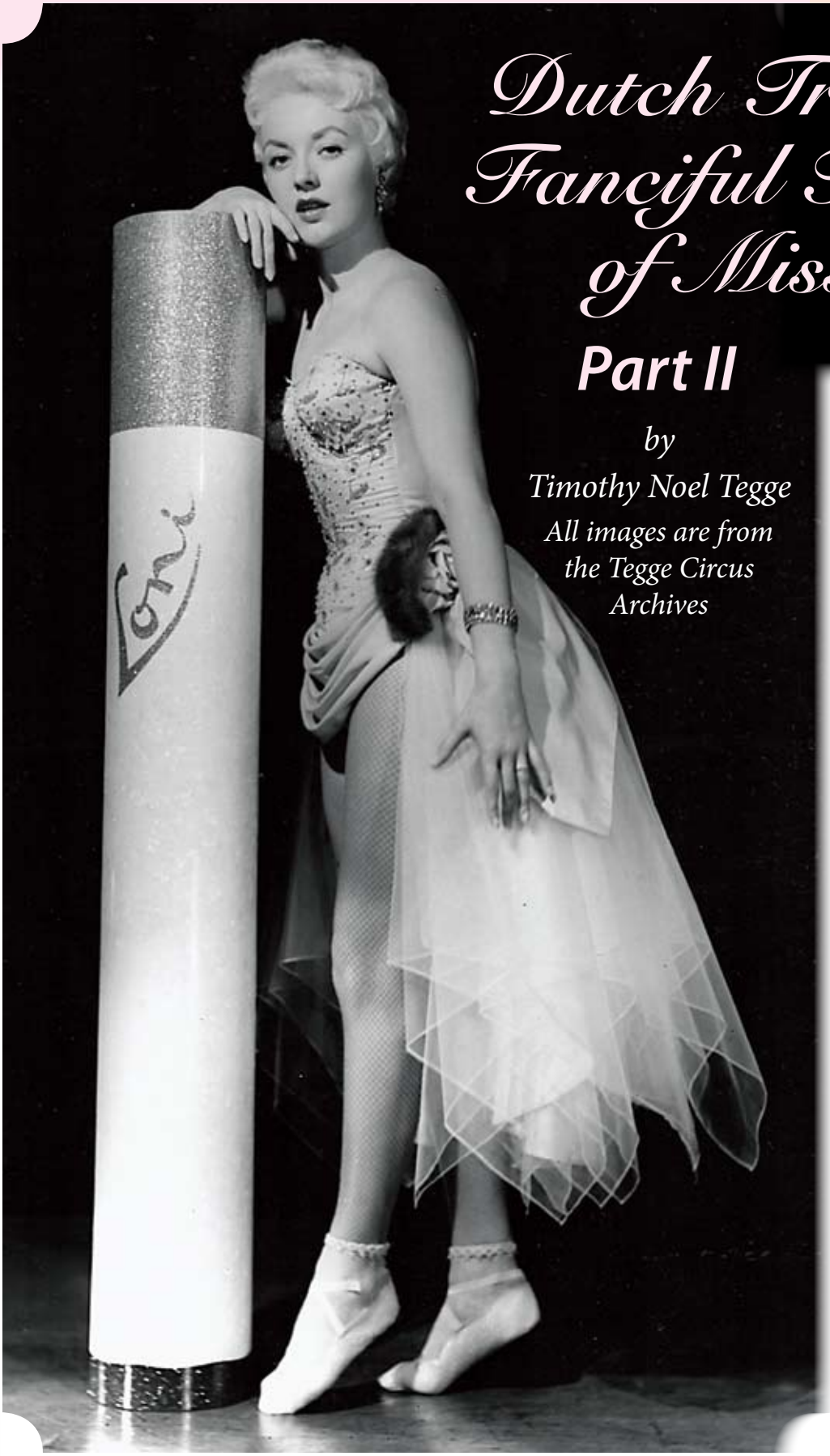
Dutch Treat: The Fanciful Footwork of Miss Loni

Part II

by
Timothy Noel Tegge
All images are from the Tegge Circus Archives



"Dear Miss Loni, I am afraid I have some bad news," wrote international theatrical agent Albert Tavel.

> "Mr. Bardy has just informed me that he does not think he will be able to open the Nouvelle Eve by the middle of February. He tells me that he was under the obligation by the Préfecture de Police, to do some work in the cabaret of the Nouvelle Eve, and that it was the reason why he had to close momentarily; that the new regulations are very strict, and that he cannot yet say when he will be able to open. In any case, and once he has been able to come to an agreement with the Préfecture, he will need at least three months to form a new troupe, and set the review. He is therefore forced to ask you to postpone your contract to a date which will be given to you as soon as ever possible."[1]

Albert Tavel, along with his partner in the agency, Felix Marounai, began pursuing signing

Lovely Miss Loni, photographed by the legendary Harcourt Studio in Paris, 1955. Influenced by American screen sensations like Marilyn Monroe, Diana Dors and Jane Mansfield, the world went Hollywood blonde-bombshell crazy by the mid-1950s. Loni embraced the look just before returning to Europe after a five-year absence. Founded in 1933 by Cosette Harcourt, the famous studio, which is still active today, was then best known for its dramatic black and white celebrity portraits.

In the shadows of Harcourt's lair, Loni's husband Freddie captured this arty image of her during the 1955 photo session in Paris.

Miss Loni to an engagement at the well-known Paris nightspot in the fall of 1952.[2] Because of her stateside exclusivity with the Charles Hogan Agency and personal representative Marcus Glaser, who kept her working steadily for three consecutive seasons after leaving the Ringling show, two prospective bookings at La Nouvelle Eve had to be put on hold. It was the third attempt to secure a contract that finally proved successful – and then it fell through completely, just prior to Loni and Freddie's European homecoming, by no fault of the agent or the showplace itself. Such postponements or even outright cancellations were rare, particularly with well-established enterprises, but they did occasionally happen. In the mid-1950s, however, there was still a lucrative abundance of work to be had by variety artists around the globe, and the better the negotiator, the busier the performer remained.

Returning abroad with almost fairytale credentials – two years with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, glowing on-screen cameos in Cecil B. DeMille's Academy Award-winning motion picture *The Greatest Show on Earth,* and tours with some of show business's biggest headliners – Miss Loni would not go long before her next engagement emerged. Her reputation preceded her arrival, and Tavel was a man with plenty of connections. By the middle of January, he had successfully replaced the hapless Nouvelle Eve incident with an even better platform on which to showcase the act. Miss Loni's first European appearance upon returning to the Old World would be a two-week run at Paris's legendary Bal du Moulin Rouge, opening on February 20, 1955. Paris was regarded as Europe's center of show business activity, with managers, representatives and directors journeying across the landmass to be stimulated by the latest novelties. As Tavel put it in his letter accompanying this new arrangement, "you will be appearing in the best 'shop window.' "[3] He was correct; nothing could top being introduced at the Moulin Rouge. One week after that first contract was sent, another was implemented for a six-day stint at the Casino Charbonnières-les-Bains, commencing on April 26,[4] and shortly thereafter came a third, this time for a ten-day engagement in Italy, at the Casino Municipale di Campione, beginning on April 15.[5] The energetic agents were on a roll and Miss Loni became the beneficiary of their perseverance. Regardless of the fact that no exclusive deal had ever been prearranged between the two parties, Tavel and Marounai cradled the Van Voordens as if there was. As other intermediaries began tailing the little Dutch wonder for their piece of

A Word on Club Dates and Cabarets

During their heyday – from approximately the early 1900s through the 1940s – novelty acts of all types made a respectable living playing the halls and theaters of Europe, the United States, and other worldly destinations. As entertainers polished their skills and graduated from one-horse shows and small-town playhouses to the stages of big-time theatricals, the show world gave birth to an ongoing generation of variety artists who would make their mark not only in the circus and vaudeville, but also in the nightclubs and magnificent cabarets of Paris, Las Vegas and beyond. There were a good many acts, particularly overseas, that were better suited to the stage than a circus ring. Those who could adapt to both were in constant demand. When Las Vegas was just beginning to spread its show-business wings in the middle 1950s, fast-paced variety performers became a must for inclusion, adding refreshing highlights to the programs of production numbers and stage-filling spectacles.

Although Miss Loni is probably best remembered now by her various circus affiliations – which crossed over into the motion picture industry, as well – she was one of the trailblazers of female artists who took the variety world by storm.

the action, Freddie, handling all the business for his antipodist wife, seemed to cater to Tavel's zeal first, who in return made sure they remained extremely busy throughout 1955 and into the following year.

Loni's intricate foot juggling maneuvers, which never failed to provoke raucous applause wherever she performed, were as invigorating as her general onstage appearance. To further accentuate her success stateside, she altered her persona by going Hollywood-platinum blonde, rivalling the likes of Marilyn Monroe and Jane Mansfield. Audiences ate it up. Her coy mannerisms interspersed between the individual tricks themselves generated a nearly hypnotic progression that kept building with the importation of each new apparatus placed atop her feet. By the time she took her final bow, the audience was all but exhausted by her vigorous workout, after which she would unpretentiously promenade offstage as if she was taking a Sunday afternoon stroll. Casting one last foxy smile over her shoulder, she then vanished into the wings of the stage that she had just set ablaze. In a letter from Madrid to Albert Tavel, Freddie modestly remarked that

> "Loni is doing extremely well at this place. Your correspondent Mr. Bermudez saw the act the first day and is now trying for several things, like Barcelona, Lisbon and such. We expect some definite news on that within a very short while and shall let you know about the developments immediately."[6]

Towards the end of May, Loni was engaged solidly all across Europe, playing some of the continent's most palatial venues in France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium. She closed out the year back in Paris, with a two-week turn at the Theatre Bobino, from December 30 through January 12, 1956.[7] She was often being held over by four days to a week if her successive bookings would permit.

In between the casino, nightclub, theater or music hall engagements, Loni and Freddie would travel back and forth to Holland intermittently to spend time with their families. If during any of those stop-offs the Circus/Theater Abeen was showing somewhere, Loni was always ready and eager to augment the program by kicking around her barrel and four-pointed cross. On occasion, her little brother Janny, whom she adored, assisted her for old-time's sake. She treasured the intimacy of her parents' show, savored every chance to see her brother present his unsupported ladder turn, and never passed up the opportunity of doing her foot juggling act in her native surroundings.

By January 1956, proposals from theatrical agencies and

An energetic Miss Loni rewards an adoring audience with one of her eminent flirtatious bows from the stage of her family's Circus-Theatre Abeen.

Janny Roelf Abeen, Loni's kid brother, with whom she was affectionately close. Before she met Freddie, Janny (pronounced "Yah-nee") often assisted her in the foot juggling act.

show producers throughout Europe as well as the United States were being directed to Loni on at least a weekly basis. Wherever she appeared, it seemed as though someone was waiting to offer her ten days in Beirut, another month in Paris, or a return to New York City. Even her old comrade Umberto Bedini, who was the original "patch" in securing her 1950-51 Ringling contract, sent a query: "I would ask you to write me from time to time where you work and when you are free, because I might occasionally find some interesting engagement for you, be it in Europe or overseas. With best regards, Yours sincerely, Bedini."[8] The show world was at Loni's feet, both literally and figuratively.

Miss Loni's props hardly stopped twirling, and Freddie's fingers couldn't type fast enough to keep up with business communications. Amidst that constant barrage of letters and telegrams, Albert Tavel, too, was ever present. On January 19, he forwarded details regarding a month-long summer engagement at Copenhagen's renowned Tivoli Gardens, but before that was further deliberated, he followed up with another letter two weeks later, in which he wrote, "I have an offer for a B.B.C. television [show] on the 4th of March," and then he stipulated the terms of salary, accommodations and so forth. "I think you should accept this as it may bring you some interesting offers for England."[9] Thus consenting to appear on *The Max Wall Show,* a one-season-only comedy and variety program that highlighted the farcicalities of its namesake, Loni and Freddie reported to the BBC Television Theatre in Shepard's Bush on March 4, 1956, for a live broadcast later that same evening.[10]

No place like home, Loni performs her foot juggling act back in the modest surrounding of the family's Circus-Theatre Abeen during a layoff between her cabaret and theater dates, c.1955.

Jetsetters Freddie and Loni disembarked from a plane in Madrid, where Loni would appear for a two-week run at the Casablanca Theatre in May 1955.

As European dates were now being finalized into midspring, a good 16 months or so after returning abroad, Freddie began feeling nostalgic for the United States and longed to go back. It didn't much matter to Loni where she did the

Inasmuch as circuses had constantly undergone changes, so did the traveling Abeen family entity. Sticking with the same physical blueprint, but changing the attraction content, Loni's family converted their variety show into a more accessible sport-themed attraction. The Abeen Sport Hall replaced novelty acts with wrestlers and boxers and enjoyed regular success after doing so.

act, be it stateside or away, just as long as she could be working. After marginal discussion between themselves, the Van Voordens decided it was once again time to pursue American engagements. They would honor the foreign contracts confirmed through late May and then sail off to the States shortly thereafter. Replying to Tavel's letter of February 11, 1956, from Apeldoorn, Holland, Freddie related "I'm sorry not to be able to accept the Tivoli contract as it is. Month of August is too late in the year, since we'll be back in America by then."[11]

On the heels of a ten-day reappearance at Italy's Casino Municipale di Campione, which closed on May 13, Loni and Freddie traveled back to Holland to again spend time with their families before departing for America. By now the Abeen family operation had undergone a complete change in format, abandoning variety acts altogether for what had recently proven itself to be a more practical and profitable vehicle: wrestling. The physical layout of the show remained the same, while the payroll had been reduced considerably. Essentially all that was needed from this point forward were an announcer and referee – positions that were covered by Loni's father and brother Janny – and a couple of guys who could wrestle and/or box the local challengers wherever the show set up. Loni's mother and Janny's fiancée, Tini, handled the front-end ticket sales. The once Circus/Theater Abeen had now evolved into a traveling "Sport Hall" and was doing well.

The Van Voordens bid farewell to Europe and their homeland aboard the Holland America Line's *M. V. Rijndam,* departing Rotterdam on June 1, 1956, and docked in New York City four or five days later.

Upon returning to the United States, Freddie and Loni's first order of business was to secure whatever bookings might still be negotiable. They had been away from the national show scene for a year and a half now, and things had noticeably begun to change during their absence. Although variety revues were holding up dependably across the Atlantic, American vaudeville was hastily declining, leaving many of its regulars without jobs. But because of the nature and quality of Loni's aptitude, she would have no trouble weathering the storm. However, they picked the middle of the year to resurface, long after the bulk of better summer engagements had already been dished out to other artists. As a rule, June, July and August agreements were carved in stone by late February or early March at the latest, and longwinded negotiations for most fall bookings were being finalized as well. Although nobody had forgotten Miss Loni and those magical feet, many agents and managers were under the assumption that she would still be tied up on foreign soil for a while longer. There was not much room for ingenuity at this late date. Freddie wasted no time in contacting Loni's former agents Charlie Hogan and Marcus Glaser, hoping to get back into their catalog of submissions as soon as possible. At the same time, he also reached out to several other firms for work in an attempt to piece together a handful of spot engagements that would lead them back to the Midwest. Fortunately, Larry Gengo, a former vaudevillian now placing novelty acts at New York City's RKO Palace Theatre, responded in a timely manner. He hired Loni for a two-week run beginning on June 22 as one of eight different variety

A breathtaking view of the lavish Delhi Palace cabaret, in Hamburg, Germany, just one of the many elegant showrooms where Loni and Freddie would "hang their hats" while touring throughout Europe. The continent was bursting with such venues during the 1950s.

acts to work live on stage before the featured movie.[12]

A modest handful of documents recounting the balance of 1956 establishes that Miss Loni did remain active, despite their untimely mid-summer reprise. Among those papers and ephemera exists a program from Montreal's most significant showroom in its day, the Bellevue Casino. The rundown cites "Loni and Company - Artistry in Foot Juggling" as third on the bill in what was ballyhooed as "A Brand-New Glittering Broadway Spectacular." Entitled *Red, Hot and Blue,* the production opened on October 25 and ran for 14 days afterwards, closing on November 5.[13] Soon after, she appeared at Cincinnati Gardens from December 14-20, followed by two weeks at the Brown Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky, commencing on December 21.

Trailing champagne toasts to the new year and final bows at her recent Louisville stand, Loni and Freddie eagerly set their sights on what was shaping up to be a banner year. In November of the year just past, they signed a deal with the management of Chicago's most sophisticated nightclub, the Chez Paree. Everyone who was anyone in show business played it at one time or another, from Frank Sinatra to Sally Rand, and it was a glamorous place in which to be seen. Loni was now to be added to its list of royalty. She began on January 10, 1957, "for a period of two weeks and six days," as the contract was worded,[14] supporting the headliners Roberta Sherwood and Myron Cohen.[15] Then, a couple of weeks past the Chicago run, they would steal away from the icy-cold Midwest winter for the warmer climates of the Nevada desert. By special arrangement with burlesque mogul Harold Minsky, with a 5% kickback to the Charles Hogan Agency,[16] Miss Loni, along with her light-footed assistant, would soon debut at the comparatively new Dunes Hotel on what had not yet developed into the famous Las Vegas strip, performing in Nevada's first-ever topless revue, *Minsky's Follies.*

The Nevada State Legislature was strongly opposed to the provocative spectacle at first, but apparently when it set a record for attendance early on, playing to 16,000 customers in a single week, their opinions quickly changed.[17] The agreement called for three shows nightly – at 8:15 P.M., 12:00, and 2:30 A.M. – seven days a week, for seven consecutive weeks. Needless to say, this schedule of 147 back-to-back shows, with no days off, put Loni in perfect shape act-wise. It was a rigorous grind, but she absolutely loved it. On a side note, a souvenir postcard for the Minsky show, placed at table settings throughout the room, pictured a Monroe-esque blonde in a black corset and stockings, lounging back against a white fur draped couch, slightly reminiscent of Loni's *bokje.* No doubt some visitors to the Follies did a doubletake when Loni stepped onstage, possibly wondering if she were that same girl on the card. When that engagement reached its end, she and Freddie bid adieu to "Sin City," having by then established a friendship with the burlesque magnate that would span many years to come.

The year 1957 continued with an extensive string of club dates that began in April and ran almost nonstop through December. From weekend stopovers at fashionable country clubs to week-long-plus engagements at swanky hotel showrooms from one end of the map to the other, Loni entertained nightclubbers, convention goers, thrill seekers and business associates alike. Sandwiched in between what became the ordinary was the extraordinary. She and Freddie spent the entire month of July hopping about the Hawaiian Islands for producer-promoter Wally Yee, exhibiting 21 days out of 34. That particular excursion kicked off in Honolulu

at the 49th State Fair. On the same bill, meant to be a "draw," was former Western matinee idol Ken Maynard, who had by then vanished from the limelight almost entirely. Inadvertently, most print advertisements for the event failed to mention his name.

Following Yee's vacation-like tour of Hawaii, Miss Loni next found herself in the spotlight of Frank Sennes's Moulin Rouge on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, and then on to Sacramento for the California State Fair. It was a most impressive itinerary.

Freddie and Loni had rekindled their close relationship with Marcus Glaser and the Hogan office not long after coming back into the country several months prior. While they remained faithful to the terms of their original "exclusive" arrangement, they also realized that it would now be advantageous, even necessary, to accept offers from other mediators as well. Understanding, of course, that this would often involve paying split and even double commissions at times against their contracted salaries, it would magnify their options for more work collectively. Just about every moderate-size city retained one or two talent agents at any given time, and within the perimeters of a major metropolis like New

Loni and Jacqueline Hurley, an acrobatic dancer-contortionist, and horizontal bar acrobat Johnny Robbins (far right) pose with a couple of producer Wally Yee's unidentified staff members under the big top at the 49th State Fair in Honolulu, July 1957. Loni and "Jackie" were good friends and would again troupe together in 1961 with the Polack Bros. Circus.

York or Los Angeles, there were scores of them. Obviously, Chicago fell into that same demographic. Fascinatingly enough, as scattered about the Windy City as agents were, one specific location in the heart of it all became an epicenter of artists' representation during the mid-1950s, and it continued as such well into the early 1970s. Now a luxury apartment complex, the 203 North Wabash Building was once, in its prime, home to as many as 15 different talent agencies and production companies at the same time. Polack Bros. Circus also leased office space there for over 20 years. Marc Schultz, who to this day still operates The Howard Schultz Theatrical Agency, an entertainment bureau founded by his father in 1953, reflected on their residency at "203" with comic affection. "My dad used to refer to

(Left 2 photos) Separated at birth? Not at all, but coincidentally, the model used to adorn souvenir postcards for the Minsky Follies, Nevada's first-ever topless revue, bore a striking first-glance resemblance to Miss Loni. She once mentioned autographing the occasional postcard during her stint at the Dunes, never admitting that it wasn't actually her in the photo.

Miss Loni's first engagement back on American turf in 1956 was at the RKO Palace Theatre in New York City. She was one of eight variety acts on a bill that preceded the featured motion picture of the day. By the mid-to-late 1950s, this type of setup was what was left of live vaudeville in the United States, and it was hastily diminishing.

While playing a two-week run at Louisville's Brown Hotel in December of 1956, Loni also managed to squeeze in a matinee and evening gig at the Kentucky Expo Center, on the bill with TV's Duncan Renaldo – aka "The Cisco Kid" – and a handful of other circus and variety acts.

it as the house of forty thieves, because there were so many different agents under the same roof. A bunch of those guys would schedule appointments until early in the afternoon, then go to lunch, and proceed to get completely smashed."[18]

Loni and Freddie's daughter Barbara well remembers her parents paying repeated visits to Glaser and Hogan, who also occupied a unit at the Wabash Avenue offices:

> "You had to put in an appearance every now and then, just to hang out and schmooze for a while. The agents liked that. And the women got all dolled up when they went – stockings, heels, furs (regardless of the weather). The idea was to look like you were so successful you really didn't need the work. This was to impress not only the agents, but also the other acts you would inevitably run in to in the halls of the 203 building."[19]

The offices were constant hubs of activity, with performers of all types – jugglers, comedians, dancers, hand balancers and such – crossing paths in elevators and hallways, bouncing from suite to suite. It was another romantic element of an industry that does not really exist anymore, and like show business itself, those passing moments were equally as colorful and exciting.

Picture now the formulaic movie actor's portrayal of a late 1950s/early Sixties era theatrical agent. A good reference would be Woody Allen's 1984 film *Broadway Danny Rose*. Cameos played by character actors like David Kissel or Sandy Baron conjure up what most non-showbiz people think agents looked like and how they behaved. Add to that stereotype, a scripted verbal reaction to a good-looking, well-dressed woman, and you would probably expect them to exclaim (with a cigar in the corner of their mouth) that "she looked like a million bucks." In rare instances, they might. Realistically, the true-to-life representatives of performers like Loni, along with the multitude of other beauties in their rolodex for that matter, were never subjected to such bawdiness. That did not mean that those stogie-chomping intermediaries didn't appreciate a good-looking gal from time to time. But for the most part, they were actually true gentlemen who treated women with the highest respect.

And Freddie was the perfect business manager for Loni. He knew how to "schmooze." He was constantly knocking out letters to agents, club managers and producers by the dozens on just about a daily basis. When he wasn't trying to land a date, Freddie was farming out long-shot queries to a gamut of different companies, pointing out how ideal his

bride's foot juggling skills could be to advertise their products, whether it was a pair of nylons or a monkey wrench. As can be detected in the excerpted text from his letter to the Narragansett Brewing Company, Freddie had the approach down to a science:

> "Miss Loni is currently appearing at the DUNES HOTEL, Las Vegas, Nevada, and March 28th will be the closing date of her six-week engagement at the place.
>
> "Allow me to express the opinion that the act could be extraordinarily interesting to build into a completely new and original commercial. According to me, the possibilities of utilizing the unusual "art" of foot-juggling, especially when executed by an extremely pretty and elegant girl like MISS LONI, could be tremendous when worked into a TV-commercial for a company like yours. I especially want to draw your attention to the fact that, although she works her act with a standard set of props, she could just as well juggle with different things, like for instance objects pertaining to your product."[20]

It was a letter in a bottle – another of many over the years, but this one received an encouraging reply from Narragansett's Advertising Manager, John W. Haley, just a few weeks later:

> "Dear Mr. Van Voorden: If we hadn't postponed the introduction of a certain new package, we would have long since worked out a plan for television commercials with your Miss Loni. As it stands now, we are thinking of opening the subject very late in this year and if you will keep me informed of your itinerary, it is quite possible that we will be in touch with you then or before.
>
> "The writer [of the commercial] was most impressed by the beauty and talent of Miss Loni and has a very definite commercial routine in mind featuring this most attractive and versatile young lady.
>
> "Unless you have need for the pictures which have come to me from both you and Mr. Glaser, we would like to retain same until our plans are more advanced…"[21]

Warrior that he was, Freddie kept up persistent communications with Haley, providing Loni's route all the way into late November, but in the long run, nothing ever came of it. Alas, the "most attractive and versatile" Miss Loni never foot-juggled a twelve-pack of the company's product on television, and likewise, Freddie never again drank Narragansett Lager.

She hadn't been back in the United States for more than nine months and was only about ten weeks into her 1957 itinerary when Loni already started receiving inquiries for dates into the following year. There were offers coming in from across the country, from Europe, even Australia. Overseas venues begged her to come back; domestic agents and producers requested she remain stateside. Freddie was practically typing his fingers to the bone, answering letters from Paris and New York, replying to submissions from former comrades like Albert Tavel, and romancing first-time negotiations with newly acquired agency connections such as England's Billy Marsh. There were numerous options to consider, all of which were enticing. It was an almost overwhelming dilemma. On the one hand, they loved America; on the other, they cradled

Miss Loni performed on stage at the famous Paris Olympia Music Hall in October of 1955. Although her routine did include one specific signature trick, everything she tossed about with her feet, from start to finish, became a feature. Comparing notes with other antipodists over the years, it was usually agreed that a ball was more of a woman's trick than that of a man. Although nothing has ever been declared to make this a prerequisite, the fact remains, and it was usually performed as the opening to the act. Another classic foot-juggling prop is a giant playing card, such as the one shown here. Starting with the card flat on the feet, the juggler then skillfully tossed it on end, gingerly stepped it from corner to corner, and finally dropped it flat to the feet once again before spinning the dickens out of it at breakneck speed.

Freddie snapped this wonderful full-length shot of Loni somewhere along the way, but never bothered to identify the location. This c.1956-1957 image confirms that Miss Loni was, indeed, pretty as a picture.

fond memories of their overseas engagements and the opportunity to spend time with their families. They started working on a blueprint that, if properly executed, would be able to give them the best prospects on both continents. As the months flew by and summer turned to fall, Freddie and Loni set out to book the first part of the year in America and then travel abroad for the latter portion of the season.

The stars were lining up nicely for Miss Loni's 1958 global expedition, which would kick off during the second week of January with a couple of hotel ballroom dates in the Midwest. On January 31 she would return to Chicago's luxurious Chez Paree as a featured attraction in the Gordon MacRae Show, flanked by a line of girls in a specially choreographed number listed in the program as "Circus Days with Loni - Artistry in Foot Juggling."[22] MacRae was a popular stage, screen and recording star during this period, so for Loni to share the bill with him was another major coup. Engagements such as this made it much more effective for the agency when soliciting the act to future producers: "Miss Loni is available and will be coming to you directly from her engagement with…"

Meanwhile, a steady flow of international correspondence was being exchanged, setting up European engagements for later in the year. The plan was taking shape perfectly.

Just back from a club date at the Alms Hotel in Cincinnati on January 9, Loni and Freddie spent a few days refreshing her props and wardrobe for the approaching Chez Paree fortnight. It looked as though they had the world on a string.

But like a brick through a plate-glass window, Loni's world was about to be shattered. BW

To be continued.

Endnotes

1. Albert Tavel letter to Loni Van Voorden, Dec. 1, 1954, Tegge Circus Archives.
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3. Albert Tavel letter to Loni Van Voorden, Jan. 19, 1955, Tegge Circus Archives.
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5. Contract for Casino Municipale di Campione d'Italia dated Feb. 12, 1955, Tegge Circus Archives.
6. Fred Van Voorden letter to Albert Tavel, May 12, 1955, Tegge Circus Archives.
7. "Miss Loni" business correspondence and contracts, Tegge Circus Archives.
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13. Souvenir program folder for Bellevue Casino revue, Oct. 25-Nov. 5, 1956.
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15. Herb Lyon, "Tower Ticker," *Chicago Tribune,* Jan. 10, 1957, p. 32.
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19. Barbara Tegge personal interviews conducted by Timothy Noel Tegge.
20. Fred Van Voorden letter to John W. Haley, Narragansett Brewing Co., Mar. 19, 1957, Tegge Circus Archives.
21. John W. Haley, Narragansett Brewing Co., letter to Fred Van Voorden, Apr. 17, 1957, Tegge Circus Archives.
22. Souvenir program for the Gordon MacRae Show at the Chez Paree, Chicago, Jan. 1958.

2022 Convention a Smashing Success!

by Aíne Murphy Norris

In late July, 2022, the Circus Historical Society held its annual convention near Bridgeport, Connecticut, home to the Barnum Museum and other historic circus sites. This convention was highly anticipated, with palpable excitement from members, after the previous year's event moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendees were excited to meet in person once again for a full convention agenda featuring presentations by leading international circus professionals, historians and authors, as well as auctions, excursions and other social events. The event brought together 85 registrants including international attendees and those who attended via Zoom.

Betsy Golden Kellem not only helped staff the registration tent, but also delighted convention attendees with her juggling skills. Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

On Saturday afternoon, a small group of members traveled to Hartford, Connecticut and visited the site of the circus big top fire that took such a tremendous toll on human life and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus itself in July 1944. In the evening, the night before the convention began, the same group and a few other CHS members attended the all-new Garden Bros. Nuclear Circus show, "Humans Gone Wild" at the Eastern States Exposition grounds in West Springfield, Massachusetts. The Garden show employed a huge new red and yellow big top wherein a high-powered performance was presented.

The convention kicked off the following morning in the grand ballroom of the Trumbull Marriott. When attendees entered the room, they were guided to the registration tent to pick up the souvenir program which was edited by long-time CHS member Brian Liddicoat, a circus swag, and a name badge, many of which were accented by colorful rib-

Following a visit to the Hartford 1944 big top fire site, a group of about a dozen CHS members joined additional convention attendees for a performance of the new Garden Bros. circus under the big top in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

CHS President Bruce Hawley congratulated Ph.D. candidate Margaret Kirby following her presentation concerning American circus professionals in Asia in the mid-19th century.

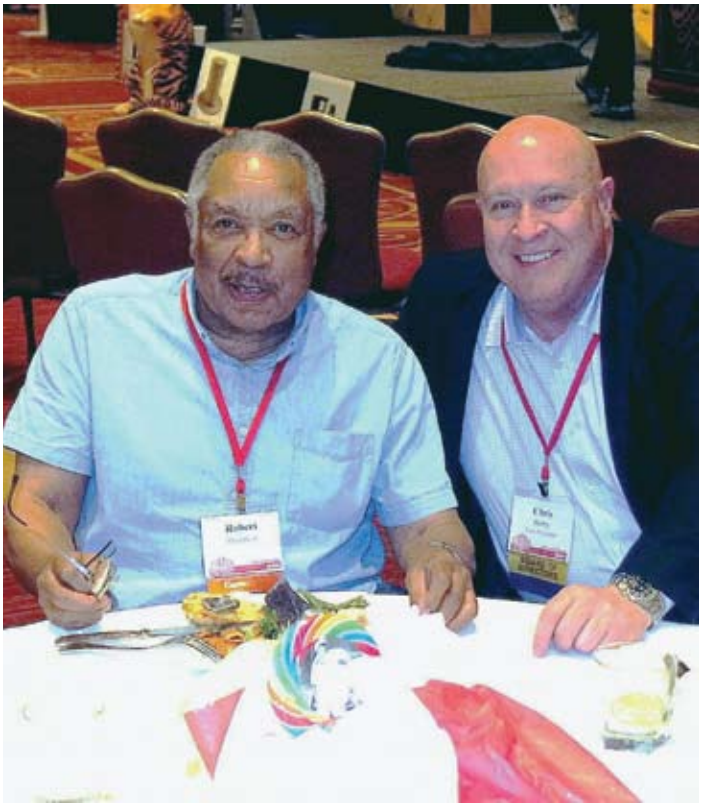
Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

bons that indicated Board of Trustees members and presenters, as well as special ribbons announcing distinctions such as First of May for first-timers, Trouper – presented to those celebrating 60-plus years as CHS members, and Equestrian Director – for those celebrating 50-59 years of membership. The room was lined with tables featuring items for the silent auction, book sales, and two tables featuring John Rezuke's model of the Ringling circus Blue Unit train.

The afternoon began with opening remarks from CHS President Bruce Hawley followed by a warm welcome to Bridgeport and Barnum country from Kathleen Maher, Executive Director of the Barnum Museum. Aíne Norris, CHS board member and Ph.D. student at Old Dominion University, presented a research update about turn-of-the-century aerialist Eva Clark, as a follow-up to her 2020 *Bandwagon* article. Dr. Dawn Rogala, 2019 Stuart Thayer Prize winner and author of *When the Circus Came to Town! An American Tradition in Photographs,* discussed her

Former Big Apple Circus executives and performers enjoyed a moment together in the Grand Ballroom – left to right: Brian Liddicoat, Don Covington, Paul Binder and Vanessa Thomas.

Paul Gutheil photograph



Long-time CHS member Robert Houston and CHS Vice President and Bandwagon *Associate Editor Chris Berry renewed their acquaintance, as did so many other members in attendance.*

Paul Gutheil photograph

John Rezuke shared his model of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Blue Unit train and reminisced with convention attendees. Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

history as a circus photographer in the 1990s. Peggy Adler, author of *Images of America CLINTON (Arcadia)* presented on the Pallenberg Wonder Bears, followed by an in-depth look at the Huling brothers and their trained sea lions by Huling grandson Gary Bohan, Jr., author of *Sharkey: When Sea Lions Were Stars of Show Business.* Sunday presentations concluded with Les Standiford, *New York Times* bestselling author and professor at Florida International University, who discussed his book *Battle for the Big Top: P.T. Barnum, James Bailey, John Ringling, and the Death-Defying Saga of the American Circus.*

Sunday evening featured a film by Corey Boutilier about a sculpture of Barnum entitled *P. T. Barnum: The Lost Legend.* After the film, attendees enjoyed the gala opening reception with live entertainment provided by long-time CHS member Joe Barney, including a photo booth and Doc Swan's magical comedy and variety act.

Monday's presentations kicked off with Betsy Golden Kellem, attorney and board member of both CHS and the Barnum Museum, discussing the Yankee Circus on Mars performance at the New York Hippodrome. W. Patrick Bracy presented new research on family member Rose Killian, trailblazer and circus owner in the early 20th century. Founder of the Big Apple Circus, Paul Binder, was next to speak, delighting the audience with "Ritual to Theatre to Circus!" Amelia Osterud, librarian, CHS Secretary, and author of *The Tattooed Lady: A History,* presented a spirited run-down of "The Worst Season Ever:

Immediate CHS Past President Don Covington and Father Richard Notter were observed during a break between convention sessions. Paul Gutheil photograph

Circus Historical Society President Bruce Hawley introduced many of the convention presenters and did an excellent job of keeping things on time and on task. Donna Lee Dicksson

Maureen Brunsdale of Illinois State University's Milner Library, circus historian, and former Bandwagon *editor, Fred Pfening III, took a moment for the photographer during the jam-packed gathering.* Paul Gutheil photograph

Nathans & Co. 1883." Richard Flint, CHS board member, discussed equestrian James Melville's Wall Street speculations and his old-fashioned circus of 1875.

An historic 16mm film shot by a Kodak photographer of the 1927 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was presented by Richard Flint just prior to the commencement of the noontime annual banquet.

Morning presentations were followed by the annual banquet, where Lane Talburt was awarded the 2022 Stuart Thayer Prize for his *Bandwagon* article series "John Pugh: A Lifetime with the Circus." The Stuart Thayer Prize, awarded annually at convention, recognizes a superior work of circus history scholarship. The banquet speaker was Eric Lehman, professor at the University of Bridgeport and author of *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity.*

Monday afternoon featured several presentations, including a social history of the Indian circus by Nisha Poyyaprath Rayaroth, a Fulbright fellow at Yale University, and a Zoom discussion of Ricardo Bell and the legacy of Relajo in the Mexican circus by Javier Hurtado, Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University. Mark St. Leon, Ph.D., author of *Circus: The Australian Story* presented on American circus in Australia, 1851-1913, followed by Margaret Kirby, Ph.D. candidate at LaTrobe University in Australia, who presented on American circus professionals in Asia, 1859-1865. Monday presentations concluded with a history and demonstration of gaffed midway games by Monty Bowman.

During the diner break, Peggy Adler showed a video of Emil Pallenberg putting his last bear Snookums through her paces, and Richard Flint showed an historic16mm film shot by a Kodak photographer of the 1927 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Monday evening featured announcement of the winners of the silent auction and the much-anticipated live auction, with CHS board member Brian Hollifield, co-owner with his wife Kisha of Freedom Auction Company, serving as auctioneer. The live auction was a flurry of bidding for purchases of books, photos, ephemera, posters and other exciting pieces of circus history donated by many different members of the organization. The live and silent auctions generated about $5,400 which will be used in support various CHS efforts.

Tuesday, the final day of convention, began with a circus authors' roundtable, hosted by *Bandwagon* Associate Editor and CHS Vice President Chris Berry. Panelists included Maureen Brunsdale, CHS board member and Special Col-

Other highlights of the bus tours on Tuesday included the Barnum Memorial Statue in Seaside Park and a visit to the winter quarters site that was used by The Greatest Show on Earth *until 1927.*

Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

Many of the convention attendees made a pilgrimage to Bridgeport's Mountain Grove Cemetery where they paid their respects at the graves of P. T. Barnum and Tom Thumb.
Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

lections and Rare Books Librarian at Illinois State University; CHS board member and doctoral student Aíne Norris; CHS board member and renowned historian Fred Pfening III; and historian and video producer Lane Talburt who joined via Zoom. Following the panel, attendees were treated to a presentation about the Bridgeport winter quarters of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus by CHS President Bruce Hawley, and a sampling from the Barnum Museum and Bridgeport History Center collections, presented by curator Adrienne Saint-Pierre to inform and excite attendees for the afternoon excursion.

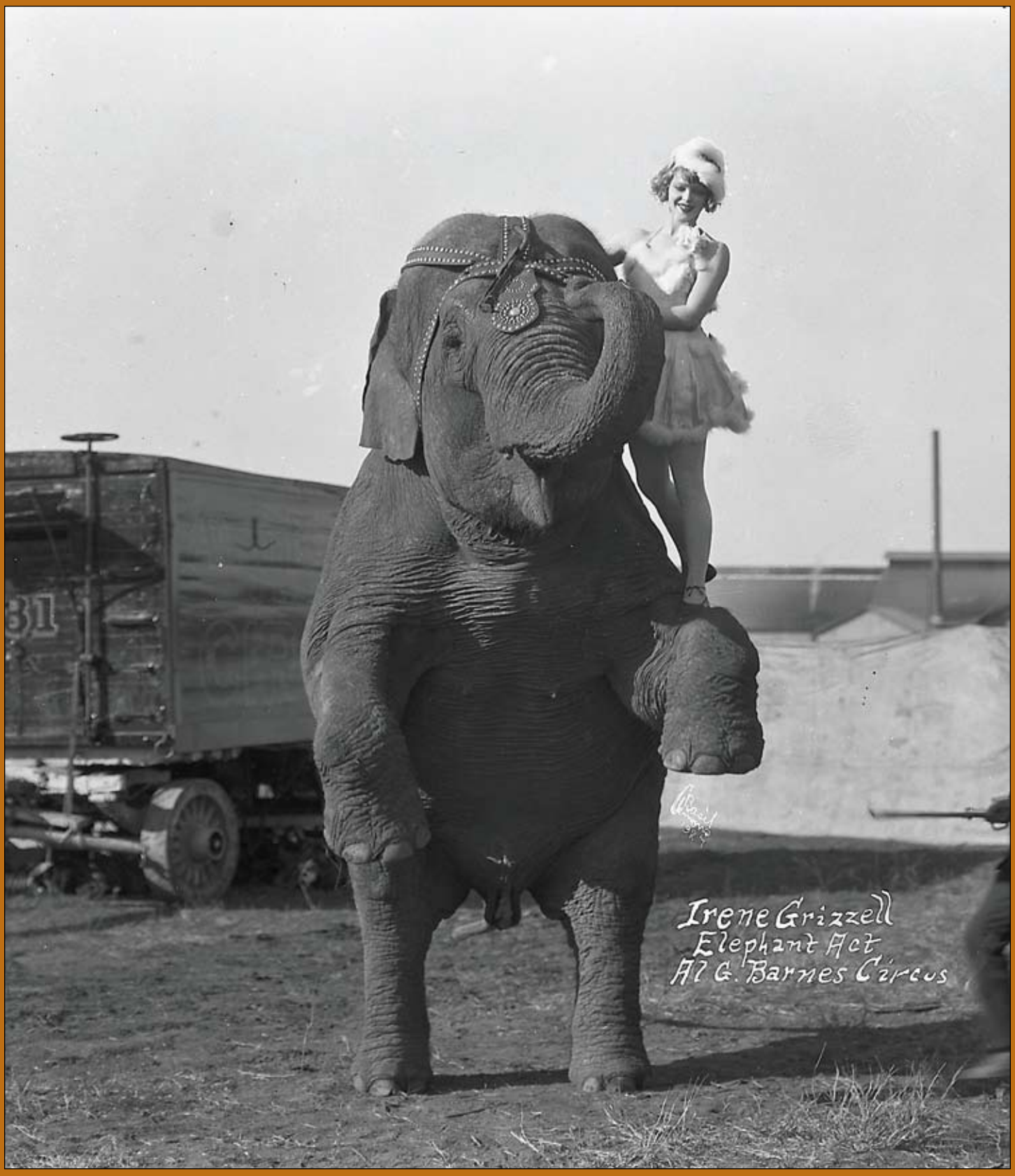
On Tuesday July 26, convention registrants had the opportunity to visit the Barnum Museum and Bridgeport Public Library.
Donna Lee Dicksson photograph

Barnum Museum Executive Director Kathy Maher guided groups of convention attendees through the historic structure and explained the need for significant gift funding to restore/rebuild the facility.
Paul Gutheil photograph

On Tuesday afternoon, attendees divided into two groups and visited the Barnum Museum and Bridgeport History Center, where they were given a look at the collection holdings. The groups also visited historic Mountain Grove Cemetery to pay homage at the gravesites of P. T. Barnum and Tom Thumb. Then it was off to the site of the former Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey winter quarters, now a neighborhood park close to downtown Bridgeport. Finally, attendees also visited the Barnum Memorial Statue. Located in Bridgeport's Seaside Park, the statue sits on an elevated pedestal facing Long Island Sound.

Overall, the excitement was considerable as attendees came together for this much-awaited in-person convention. Old and new friends greeted each other with embrace and laughter, and new members were welcomed warmly. Planning is already underway for Convention 2023, to be held in Bloomington/Normal, Illinois, the trapeze capital of the world, from August 24 through 27, 2023. Keep an eye on circushistory.org and CHS social media channels for more information. Bw

On the last day of the convention, about a third of attendees assembled at the Grand Ballroom stage for a group photo.
Donna Lee Dicksson photograph



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Many CHS members have included the CHS in their estate planning. For more information on how you can continue your support of circus history for years to come, contact Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org.